

EUROPEAN NEWSPAPER REVIEWING  
OF AFRICAN LITERATURE  
IN THE 1980s

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## ABSTRACT

This piece of research aims at analysing newspaper reviews of African literature in four European countries (Great Britain, France, Spain and Italy) in the 1980s. It also aims at demonstrating that the figure of the so-called 'committed' reviewer still exists.

The survey is based on a body of approximately 300 reviews taken from 14 newspapers. Some of the papers represent the main national dailies; others may be regarded as representative of different ideological stances.

In order to deal with as many aspects as possible of newspaper criticism, the thesis is divided into three parts, in which four different approaches have been adopted: theoretical, statistical, thematic and case-study work.

Part One (consisting of Chapters One, Two and Three) provides a theoretical and statistical introduction.

Chapter One will tackle the notion of literature as a 'joint social operation'. Moreover, it will try to define a 'review' while illustrating several approaches to the related notion of a review as a text. It will also deal with a current European debate on the nature and state of newspaper reviewing.

Chapters Two and Three will consist of a statistical .

analysis aimed at pointing out the main trends in European newspaper reviewing of African literature as well as other aspects such as the frequency of reviewing.

Part Two, consisting of Chapters Four, Five and Six, represents a thematic analysis.

The Introduction to Part Two will provide a theoretical introduction to the thematic analysis.

Chapters Four, Five and Six deal with aspects of reviewing such as the multiplicity of voices (Chapter Four), the aims of reviewing (Chapter Five) and the representation of otherness (Chapter Six).

Chapter Six, in particular, will aim at providing the following questions with an answer:

1) Are there any typical ways of representing White South African, Black African or North African literature?

2) Are the ideological stances of a newspaper always manifest in reviewing?

Part Three, finally, (consisting of Chapters Seven and Eight) contains the presentation of case-study work.

Chapter Seven will analyse the style and technique of some 'regular' contributors. Chapter Eight will deal with those very short reviews that may be often regarded as 'cultural fast-food'.



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## INTRODUCTION

This piece of research aims at analysing the non-academic reviewing of African literature in four European countries.

Its starting point is the following statement by Wole Soyinka:

*"Literature is a joint social operation that includes criticism and translation" (1).*

Non-academic reviewing of African literature may be viewed as part of a joint social operation, (perhaps it could even be defined as a 'global' operation), that also includes academic criticism and translation. However, in a broader sense, the operation also involves a whole series of social and economic processes such as publishing, marketing and advertising.

The nearly three hundred reviews collected and analysed in this project were originally written in English, French, Spanish and Italian and are taken from fourteen daily papers published in the following countries: Great Britain, France, Spain and Italy.

The scanning of newspapers and the collection of reviews took place in the second half of 1991 at the Newspaper Library (which is part of the British Library) in Colindale, North London.

Some of the newspapers analysed represent the main national dailies. Consequently, they have been taken to be indexes of the situation in the countries in question as

far as the reviewing of African literature is concerned. Other newspapers, whose circulation is limited, have been selected because they represent different ideological stances and therefore allow one to see whether and how different ideologies affect the reviewing operation.

Listed below are the newspapers analysed for each country. The period analysed for each paper is indicated in brackets:

United Kingdom:

- The Daily (and Sunday) Telegraph (1985-1990)
- The Guardian (1981-1990)
- The Independent (1986-1990)
- The Morning Star (1985-1990)

France:

- Le Figaro (1985-1990)
- Le Monde (1981-1990)
- L'Humanité (1985-1989)

Spain:

- ABC (1985-1989)
- La Vanguardia (1985-1989)
- El País (1985-1989)

Italy:

- L'Osservatore Romano (Vatican City)(1985-1989)
- La Stampa (1981-1990)
- La Repubblica (1985-1990)
- Il Manifesto (1986-1988)

As can be seen from the periods taken into account, the analysis focusses on the 1980s, on the second half of the decade in particular, and ends in 1990.

Apart from the Introduction, the Conclusion, the References and the Appendix, this thesis will consist of eight chapters. Some of the chapters will be divided into a

number of sections.

The thesis is divided into three main parts. Part One represents a theoretical and statistical introduction comprising Chapters One, Two and Three. Part Two is a thematic analysis including an Introduction followed by Chapters Four, Five and Six. Part Three, finally, consists of the presentation of case-study work and is made up of Chapters Seven and Eight.

As far as the approach adopted in this piece of research is concerned, some of the chapters will take the form of a mainly statistical approach, others will be written from a theoretical point of view, others will consist of a thematic analysis and, finally, a number of chapters will place the main emphasis on a the presentation of case-study work.

The decision to adopt four different perspectives has been taken in order to deal with as many aspects as possible of the newspaper reviewing of African literature.

Chapter One is a (mostly theoretical) introduction to newspaper reviewing considered either as a genre or as a sub-genre of literary criticism as a whole.

The first half will concentrate on the theoretical implications of the notion of literature as a 'joint social operation' and a review as a text.

The second half will tackle the debate currently under way in some European newspapers and non-academic magazines (in Italy and Great Britain in particular) about the present state of reviewing, the nature and the rôle of newspaper reviewing. The figure of the so-called 'traditional' or 'committed' or 'militant' critic will also be examined.

Finally, the presence of African literature in newspaper



reviews in Europe will be considered.

Chapters Two and Three will provide the statistical background against which the thematic discussion of Chapters Four, Five and Six, as well as the presentation of case-study work of Chapters Seven and Eight, will be set.

Chapter Two will be a comparative statistical analysis of trends in European newspaper reviewing of African literature. After the theoretical introduction of Chapter One, Chapter Two aims at providing an immediate contextualization within the reality of newspaper reviewing.

The data collected will be reorganized and trends will emerge for individual papers and countries. Thus, the frequency of reviewing will be analysed in relation to each country, newspaper and author.

A clear picture of the geographical and linguistic breakdown (in terms of origin in the African countries) of the books and authors reviewed will also emerge.

Chapter Two is divided into four sections.

Section One will include a comparative analysis of four newspapers at five points in the decade.

Section Two will deal with the rôle of the Reviewer. In particular it will single out those reviewers who may be regarded as regular contributors.

Section Three will analyse the frequency of reviewing for each author. It will also single out those books that are available, either in their original version or in translation, in all four countries under consideration.

Section Four, finally, will tackle the so-called 'minor'

authors, those who are only reviewed once or twice in the ten-year period in the newspapers analysed.

Chapter Three will consist of an analysis of the development of the reviewing of African literature in each country in the 1980s. This chapter aims at analysing the decade (the second half in particular) from a different, more comprehensive, perspective in comparison with Chapter Two.

In Chapter Three all fourteen newspapers will be looked at in a detailed discussion of the trends indicated by the statistical survey in Chapter Two. The validity of the trends will be extended to newspapers that originate in ideologically different areas. This chapter will therefore include an analysis of those newspapers that cannot be regarded as highly representative of individual countries.

The Introduction to Part Two of the thesis will mark the transition between the statistical and the thematic analysis. It will provide a theoretical introduction and look at the notion of interpretation of a review.

Part Two (comprising Chapters Four, Five and Six) will consist of a mainly thematic comparative analysis of (White) South African, Black African (Subsaharan) and North African literature, based on those authors and books that are available in all four countries or are most frequently reviewed. These chapters will include several extracts from the reviews, translated into English when they come from French, Spanish or Italian newspapers. The extracts will illustrate the various points that will be raised in the course of the analysis.

Chapter Four will deal with the multiplicity of voices (such as the reviewer's, the author's, the characters' voices etc.) within a review and with the concept of dominant voice. In particular, this chapter will look at

the variety of ways in which voices can be combined and organized within a review.

Chapter Five will tackle the aims of reviewing. In order to do so, it will single out and analyse a number of regular patterns in reviewing as far as the aims are concerned.

Chapter Six will deal with different ways of domesticating and representing otherness. In particular, it will look at ways of providing readers with background information and guidelines, made up of combinations of literary, cultural, historical and political references.

Chapter Six will try to find out whether typical ways of representing White South African, Black African and North African literature may be identified.

Moreover, it will aim at finding out whether the ideological stances of newspapers are always evident in reviews.

Part Three of the thesis will include Chapters Seven and Eight and will be based on the presentation of some case-study work.

Chapter Seven will consist of an analysis of the style and technique of some of the most regular contributors. Both reviewing styles and techniques will be illustrated by several extracts taken from the reviews. The number of reviews available for each critic, together with the coverage over time of this project, permits the identification of the character of the 'personal' discourse on African literature that each critic develops.

Chapter Eight will be an analysis of those reviews that do not usually exceed 150 words and that, for this reason, may perhaps be defined as cultural 'fast food'. Moreover, it

will deal with the related notion of literary clichés (or 'tags') and stereotypical images. In this chapter the extracts will include whole reviews.

The eight chapters will be followed by the Conclusion, the References and the Appendix.

- (1) Wole Soyinka, Guardian Conversations, ICA  
(Institute of Contemporary Arts), London, 15 March  
1990

PART ONE

THEORETICAL AND STATISTICAL  
INTRODUCTION

## CHAPTER ONE

### THE JOINT SOCIAL OPERATION

#### Introduction

This chapter is intended to consider theoretical approaches to newspaper reviewing, taken as a genre or, at the least, as a sub-genre of literary criticism, and as part of a wider joint social operation.

After tackling some of the theoretical implications of reviewing (and dealing with a review as a 'text' in particular), this chapter will focus mainly on the debate which is currently taking place in a number of newspapers and non-academic magazines in some European countries, in Italy and Great Britain in particular.

The debate deals with the current state of reviewing, the nature, the rôle and the content of newspaper reviews. In particular, it addresses the concepts of 'traditional', 'committed' or 'militant' criticism.

Finally, this chapter will analyse the presence of African literature in newspaper reviews in Europe.

*"Literature is a joint social operation that includes criticism and translation" (1)*

The above statement, the starting point of this piece of

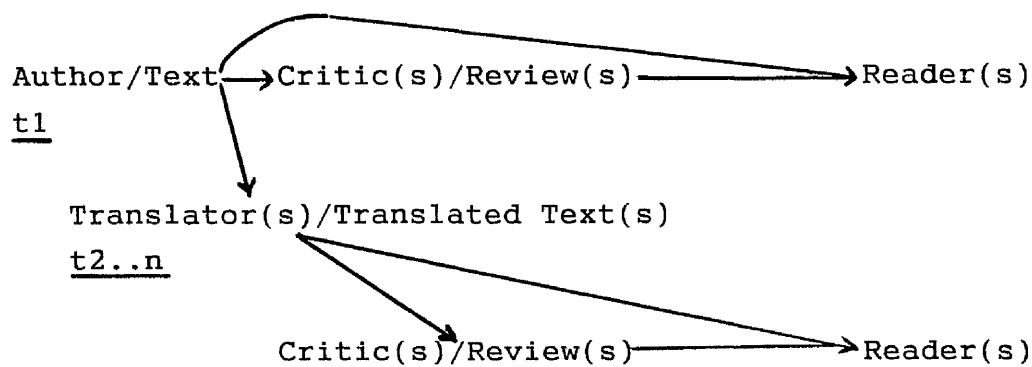
research, might be expanded by adding that the 'operation' in question also extends in space and time.

Non-academic reviewing is part and parcel of the literary joint social operation, of a network that extends in space and time. Generally, a work by a given author is first reviewed in the country or countries where it has been written and/or published. Subsequently, as soon as the book is translated into other languages, more reviews usually begin to appear in other countries as well.

Very often, except in the case of writers who are already established worldwide, such as Nobel Prize winner Nadine Gordimer for instance, the publication of the original work and the translation(s) do not tend to be simultaneous events. It might take several years before a certain book is published in a particular country. Censorship, world events or market conditions may play an important rôle in this respect.

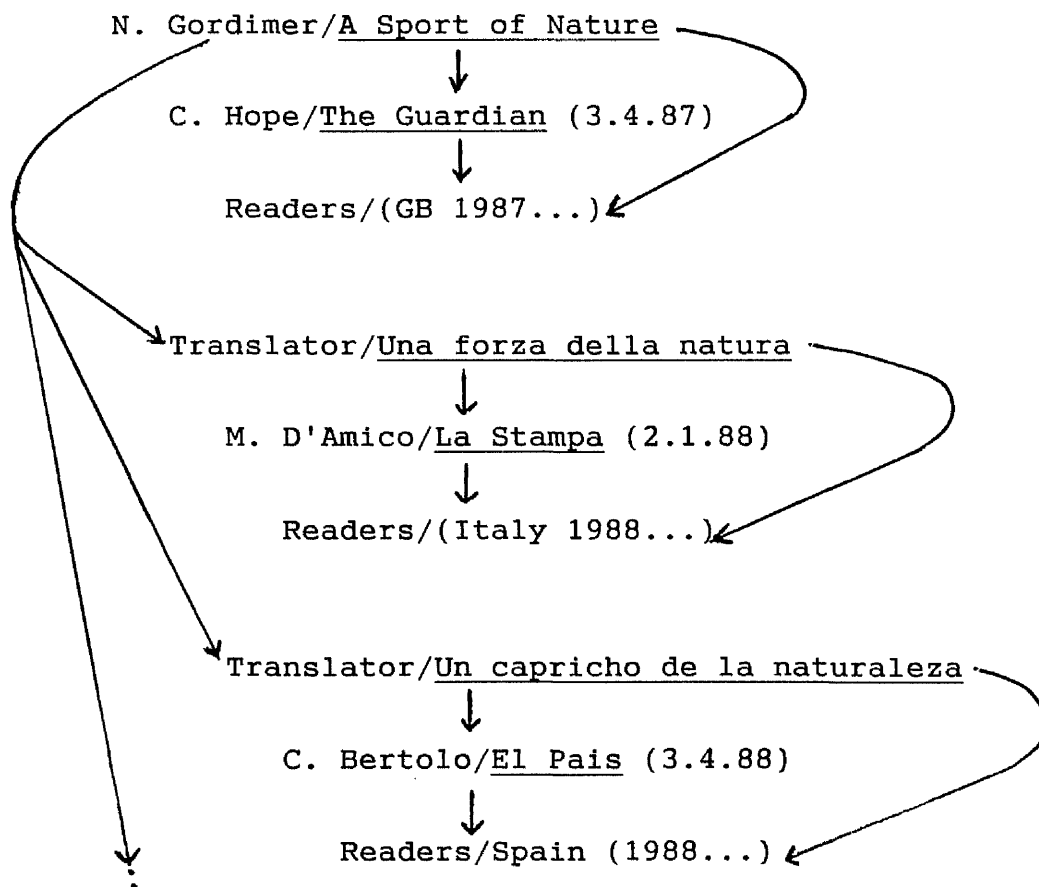
The relationship Author/Text - Critic(s)/Review(s) - Reader(s) - Translator(s)/Translated Text(s) - Critic(s)/Review(s) - Reader(s) is characterized by a great degree of complexity. Such a relationship might even be described as an endless series of constantly developing open networks, all of which criss-cross and intermingle with each other while they develop and extend in space and time.

What follows is a schematic representation of the joint social operation of literature, aimed at showing the number of functions or people involved, from a temporal perspective:

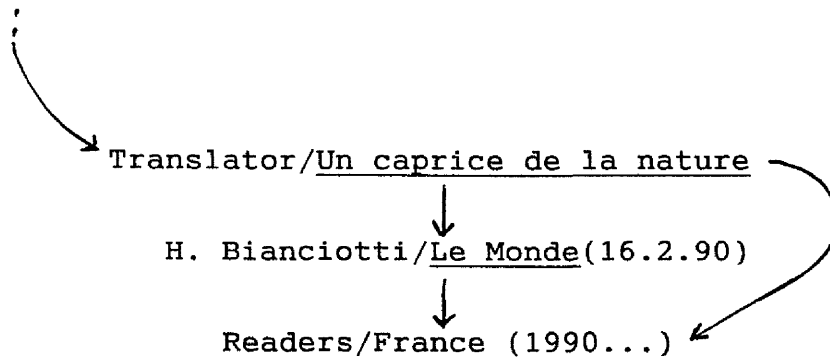


The above representation shows that the reader may be regarded as the 'final' recipient of information or influence (coming from Author, Critic and/or Translator).

In the case of a specific text, the representation is as follows:







This schematic representation shows how, once a text that might be regarded as 'primary' has been written (in this case a book of African literature), the condition exists for endless construction of other ('secondary') texts (ie translations, essays, reviews).

The above representation only deals with one book, three translations and three newspaper reviews. However, if one takes into account all the translations and newspaper reviews, besides academic essays etc, one has an idea of the extension (in both space and time) as well as of the complex growth of the joint social operation of literature (even in relation to only one book and ignoring the important figure of the publisher and the other comparatively 'minor' figures involved, such as editors, proof-readers, book-sellers, literary and press agents, book-fair organisers, publicity agents, teachers, librarians, television and radio producers etc, all the people involved in the circulation, marketing, selling and 'commoditising' of a text).

As far as the final recipients of the text are concerned, obviously, not all readers go through the reviews before they read a book; however, many do so. Some readers may end up reading the reviews and not the books. Others, however, may decide to read or buy the book as a result of having been impressed or persuaded by a review. This points to one of the functions of the review in the joint social operation: pointing out those books that are thought of as worth reading (or buying).

A review may be seen from many viewpoints. It can be regarded as a representation in itself, as a way of exercising a form of power (by means of several rhetorical devices capable of affecting the final reception of the book in terms of effectiveness and persuasiveness), or even as a field of ideological contention. Whatever its definition, a review is something that has the power to affect the reader's subjectivity: it is capable of influencing the reader.

#### A review as a 'text'

Perhaps, the most appropriate among the several definitions available is that of a review as a *text* first and foremost. The comparative analysis carried out in this thesis needs to be anchored to some 'tangible' data, which are provided by reviews meant as texts made up of words and communicative/performative speech acts or utterances.

A review as a text may be regarded as circulating in the network of the literary joint social operation. This reconfirms the nature of literature as a transmissible experience and that of the critic as a mediator between a text and the readers.

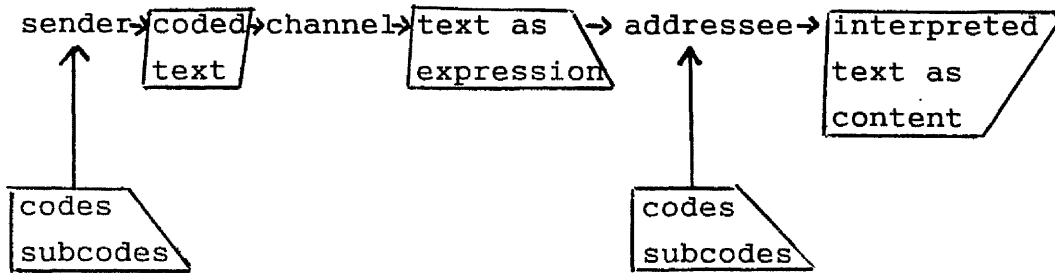
It may also be regarded as a text whose meaning can be cooperatively generated by the reader, that is as a text characterized by a '*strategy of communication based upon a flexible system of signification*' (2).

Three functions or categories may be identified in relation to a review: sender (the reviewer), message (the review) and addressee (the reader).

According to Umberto Eco, '*the reader as an active*

*principle of interpretation is a part of the picture of the generative process of the text' (3).*

A simplified reproduction of the figure of a semantico-pragmatic process adopted by U. Eco may be introduced at this point to illustrate the communication process typical of a review. (4)



A reviewer, in order to make his text communicative, has to make sure that the ensemble of cultural codes he relies upon is shared by his possible reader. This is a precondition of reviewing and can be seen in reviews such as R 3 or R 30.

*"To be a white liberal in South Africa is not as much fun at to act the critic from a Dorset cottage"*

(R 3: William Startle reviewing Nadine Gordimer's My Son's Story for The Sunday Telegraph)

*"Il protagonista è lui [il 'vu' cumprà'] l'uomo che si trascina per le nostre strade con la valigia piena di collanine"*

*"He [ie the 'vu' cumprà'] is the protagonist, the man who drags himself along our streets, carrying a suitcase full of bracelets"*

(R 30: Ernesto Gagliano reviewing Tahar Ben Jelloun's Le pareti della solitudine for La Stampa)

The above reviews, with their cultural references to 'a Dorset village' and 'vu' cumprà' (African immigrant street-sellers in Italy) show that communication is made possible by the fact that the reviewer and the reader share a number of cultural codes and subcodes: in other words, they speak the same language and they have a common cultural background.

When a reader tries to read and decode/interpret a review, he resorts to a kind of socially stored encyclopedia, ie a semantic store that is an essential part of the addressee's background.

A review, therefore, may be regarded as '*a system of nodes or joints [...] at which [...] the cooperation of the Model Reader is expected and elicited*' (5).

As was made clear at the beginning of this discussion, it is difficult to measure a text in terms of effectiveness or persuasiveness from the addressee's viewpoint.

As Umberto Eco puts it '*the reader approaches a text from a personal ideological perspective, even when he is not aware of this. [...] Since the reader is supposed to single out [...] the elementary ideological structures of the text, this operation is overdetermined by his ideological subcodes*' (6).

While reading a review, according to Umberto Eco, '*the reader implements semantic disclosures or, in other words, actualizes non-manifested properties*' (7).

Semantic disclosures may be regarded as clues or hints that have a double rôle inside a review: '*they blow up certain properties (making them totally relevant or pertinent) and narcotize others*'. (8)

This piece of research will demonstrate that this coordination of semantic disclosures (clues, hints, references, voices) is what a reviewer is in a position to do, through a process of selection, when he is writing a review. This will be illustrated in Chapter Four, dealing with the presence of voices in a review, as well as in Chapter Six, dealing with the presence of different ideological, cultural, artistic references in a review.

- A review, therefore maybe regarded as a text made up of multiple writings, voices, references, clues, etc, often drawn from different cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue, parody, clash. All the voices aim at being decoded and as Roland Barthes put it, '*there is one place where this multiplicity is focussed and that place is the reader*' (9).

Roland Barthes' definition of a text further illustrates the way a review has just been defined in this chapter, especially when he says that a text is that space '*where languages circulate*' (10) or when he refers to the '*image of an organism which grows by vital expansion*' (11).

The rôle of the reader is further pointed out when he writes that '*a text's unity lies not in its origins but in its destination. [...] The reader is simply that someone who holds together in a single field all the traces by which the written text is constituted*' (12).

Another approach to a review as a text consists in stressing its collective origin or roots, instead of concentrating on the author-function (ie the reviewer). This approach provides one with yet another interpretation of what takes place in the joint social operation of literature as a whole and in reviewing in particular.

As Ngugi wa Thiong'o puts it, a work *'is not the result of an individual genius but the result of a collective effort'* (13). A text is written in a language that is *'both a means of communication and a carrier of culture'* (14). Moreover, Ngugi argues, *'production is co-operation, is communication, is language, is expression of a relation between human beings'* (15).

A review as a text, due to its nature, can thus be defined in many ways. It has been regarded as both the product of an 'Author' and the result of a collective effort, two definitions that might even seem to contradict each other. However, one might point out that it is this contradiction which best illustrates the shifting nature as well as the inherent ambiguity and vitality (in terms of organic growth) of a text regarded as the object or the message of the literary joint social operation, an organic network extending in space and time.

### The current European debate on reviewing

The debate currently under way in some European newspapers and magazines (in Italy and Great Britain in particular) is quite timely. 'Currently' refers to the second half of 1991, the period in which this survey, and the scanning of newspapers at the Newspaper Library were being carried out.

The European debate represents a moment of reflection for newspaper reviewing, a time in which critics are assessing the development of reviewing. The assessment is a typically, perhaps predictably, post-modern revisitation of the brief history of newspaper reviewing (16).

Moreover, since most critics seem to agree on some basic points (they all point to a crisis and are pessimistic about the future), the debate might even be regarded as a chorus of voices that unanimously deplore the current state of reviewing.

The starting point in the debate is the recognition that newspaper reviewing - considered as a genre in itself or as a sub-genre of the wider field of literary criticism - like all literary genres has its own history and development, in this case intimately linked with the history of newspapers.

Most critics (Eco, Luperini, Fortini, Kermode, Cotroneo)

involved in the debate, as the quotations will demonstrate, seem to agree on the existence of two basic conditions:

a) a dichotomy (traditional vs modern reviewing) to which they often refer;

b) a crisis due to increased corporate pressure resulting in the weakening or even the annihilation of the intellectual energy of reviewing.

The quotations will also show that the overall attitude of the critics involved in these reflections is one of pessimism. This piece of research, however, though recognizing the validity of some of the points, will try to demonstrate that, in spite of the crisis of reviewing, there is scope for some optimism, in the sense that what critics often refer to as 'committed' reviewing still exists.

As far as the first point is concerned, a 'traditional' reviewer is usually defined as a critic who feels, (or rather felt, since the category, according to most critics, seems to have disappeared, that he could write about a certain book or author while referring to certain systems of reference and values. Today, however, having been shocked by the effects of modernism, the 'global' village, (the new setting of cultural communication, the place where the literary social operation takes place), has apparently lost all its certainties.

According to Umberto Eco, for instance, a traditional reviewer (a number of critics prefer to define him as a 'militant' or a 'committed' critic) was someone who simply expressed his own opinions, regardless of market pressures. Nowadays, this function has undergone a crisis. According to Umberto Eco, *"militant critics nowadays are like those sportspersons who practice a sport with which the common people are no longer*



*familiar: fencing for instance, or crossing the Atlantic on a Viking drakkar."* (17)

The names of the 'traditional' critics most often referred to in the debate are: W. H. Auden, T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, (for the Anglo-Saxon world) and Roland Barthes, G. Lukács and T. Adorno (in other European countries).

They are all critics who have dominated the literary scene in the second half of the twentieth century and whose reviewing style has influenced reviewers for decades. The first three critics represent what might be defined as the Anglo-Saxon tradition of criticism: a kind of criticism with a strong academic background, in which the relationship between the critic and the book or the author is characterized by analysis, reflection and pleasure. Roland Barthes, on the other hand, represents a 'French' tradition, a non-academic and fresh approach, perhaps more aggressive and irreverent in comparison with the Anglo-Saxon tradition. Finally, the Lukács and Adorno tradition tends to be regarded as one in which the critic is an 'Essayist' first and foremost.

It maybe awkward to generalize in this way but what is important at this point is to stress the fact that all these critics may be seen as 'founders of discursivity'. As Michel Foucault pointed out *"in the sphere of discourse, one can be the author of much more than a book - one can be the author of a theory, tradition, or discipline in which other books and authors will in their turn find a place. These authors are in a position which we shall call 'transdiscursive'"* .(18).

Moreover, *"they have produced [...] the possibilities and the rules for the formation of other texts"* (19). This transdiscursivity is one of the main characteristics of newspaper reviews. Eliot, Pound, Barthes etc. provided some examples of what is today referred to as 'traditional', 'militant' or 'committed'

criticism. They are generally regarded as reviewers who were able to ignore corporate pressure, while establishing a relationship of reflection, pleasure, criticism, etc. with a book.

As regards the second condition, ie the crisis, most reviewers would deplore the lack of an open and wide-ranging approach to the text.

No reviewing trends are immune from criticism. The semiotic approach, epitomized by Umberto Eco, is being accused of reducing everything to a text, of considering a text without taking into account the reality surrounding it. As Romano Luperini puts it in *La Repubblica*: "*the world presents itself only as a text*".(20)

The Marxist approach seems to have "*weakened as a whole, [...] while hardliners seem to be desperately trying to stick to their traditional approaches*".(21)

Finally, the psychoanalytical approach is accused of "*leaving aside too many things*" (22), in other words being narrow-minded.

This series of mutual 'accusations' points to the loss of the intellectual sharpness of newspaper reviewing, as well as to the alleged annihilation of the theoretical energies of non-academic criticism. In other words, they point out the alleged death of the wide-ranging approach referred to as 'committed' criticism.

According to Franco Fortini, today reviewers can be divided into two main categories: '*industrial critics*' and '*parade critics*'.(23)

In this pessimistic (and possibly over-simplistic) view, the former is the critic who is fully aware of working in a

standardized cultural industry dominated by corporate interests whose rules he adheres to. His main feature is the lack or loss of 'commitment' in the traditional sense.

The latter, on the other hand, performs decorative criticism. 'Parade' critics, in Franco Fortini's opinion, are sought after and highly paid by papers because of their reviewing skills. They represent the refined side of criticism: "*they can provide the illusion that non-standardized culture still exists*" (24). Still, according to Franco Fortini: "*They provide the icing on the cake*" (25). The cake in question is the cultural industry, where the icing is the reviewer's good taste and writing.

Both types of reviewers, however, undertake non-committed criticism in the sense that both are working under the burden of corporate pressure (regarded as something that prevents reviewers from adopting a wide-ranging approach resulting from a relationship of reflection and pleasure/dislike of the book).

Fortini's view is pessimistic in the sense that it does not admit the existence of a type of reviewing which is able both to ignore corporate pressures and to adopt a wide-ranging approach. This thesis will demonstrate that such a level of pessimism is not justified and that reviewers are still capable if not of completely ignoring market pressures at least of adopting wide-ranging approaches.

In a scenario such as the one described by Fortini, literary journalism is thus being accused of increasingly serving corporate interests that are not necessarily linked with intellectual interests (ie not based upon freedom of judgement).

Fortini draws attention to the market-dominated cultural

world, in which it is important to talk about a certain book by a certain author at a certain time. Criticism is a ring in the chain that includes the operations of press offices and publicity agents. Criticism, in such a circumstance, becomes a stage in the production process.

A look at the newspaper reviews collected in this survey shows that the overwhelming majority of them appear on the occasion of the publication of a new book. Were the review published three months later, a reader would most likely be unable to find the book in the shops.

Consequently, a critic today may find himself in the awkward and stressful position of having to read a book in two days, if not in two hours. And to quote Umberto Eco *"no book can be judged in two days, especially if it is a complex book"* (26).

In the same article, Umberto Eco points out that while reading the reviews, one has a feeling that the books most often reviewed are those that do not exceed one hundred pages. This disturbing awareness perhaps explains why a publisher like Adelphi in Italy, for instance, (whose books tend to be long as well as complex) is definitely underrepresented in terms of square centimetres in Italian newspapers.

At this point, in view of the alleged crisis of newspaper reviewing, the question arises as to who is going to inform potential readers about the value and the qualities of the books, if the 'militant' critic has vanished. This question clearly underlines one view of the rôle of a review: it is a text that aims at informing the reader about the value and the qualities of books.

A particular view about the nature of such value has been pointed to by Franco Fortini: *"A critic's task, when he has to limit himself to only thirty or sixty lines, is to*

*provide a synthesis of the social purpose that characterizes a book"*(27)

.  
The same concept is expressed, though in a wider context, by Frank Kermode in *The Guardian*: *"One of the main objects [of newspaper reviewing] must be to criticize (or, as they now say, 'to critique') the system it wants to displace. A principal part of its business must be to expose the unexamined or corrupt myths that animated [...] old criticism - for example, the myth of the Author, of Genre, of Canon. Having thus demythologized criticism, the new style will, some optimists predict, give the term a new and fuller sense, broadening its range to include all manner of discourse, and reflect the social and political purposes of its practitioners. It will help the oppressed in their struggles"* (28).

Significantly, the two articles by Fortini and Kermode appeared at the same time, almost to prove the fact that the time has now come for an assessment of the state of reviewing to take place in Europe. Moreover, both critics, in spite of the overall tone of pessimism that characterizes the debate, seem to express clear views as far as the rôle of 'committed' newspaper reviewing is concerned.

If one turns to the current situation in Europe as a whole, or at least in the four Western European countries that are the object of this survey, a paradox will emerge at once. If it is true that, as many critics argue, militant criticism has allegedly disappeared and that criticism itself is undergoing a deep crisis, then it is surprising that in all four countries the number of newspaper sections or pull-out magazines devoted to literature and book reviewing as well as non-academic literary magazines keeps growing, literally by the week.

There is frantic reviewing activity going on. The message addressed to the reader seems to be: 'if you don't read, you're lost'.

The present situation, according to Franco Fortini, is thus characterised by too many books (and people behind them) asking to be reviewed. The solution for a critic (as for the reader indeed) lies in being extremely selective: a selection, after all, represents a judgement in itself.

The pressure from publishing lobbies often results in reviews being written hastily, in empty or 'syrupy' reviews that sometimes even represent exchanges of favours between publishers or writers and reviewers, amongst whom rank some writers who work as freelance, part-time critics, some of them being highly paid and much sought after 'parade' reviewers.

According to another Italian critic who took part in the debate, Roberto Cotroneo, what has been defined as 'industrial' newspaper reviewing is often characterized by *"too many commonplaces, held together by reviews"* (29).

One of the aims of this survey is to find and point out commonplaces used in the reviewing of African literature. The use of commonplaces is particularly dangerous because, as most critics would claim, they can prevent readers from 'thinking'.

Although it is difficult to judge whether a given review is capable of leading readers to think, the comparative analysis of articles carried out in this survey will demonstrate that a number of reviews appear to be influenced by a series of corporate-oriented events such as the identification (if not the 'invention') and subsequent popularization (by means of the mass media) of those so called 'literary cases' or 'fashionable

trends'.

Such trends seem to be regularly set by literary prize winners. Literary prizes are often coupled with or followed by 'exclusive interviews' in glossy magazines, or book-launches etc., all events in which the reader is frequently regarded as a passive consumer of cultural products.

However, in contrast to this situation, some critics suggest that the new purpose of newspaper criticism is to give readers a more active rôle. As the Italian critics Furio Colombo and Pietro Corsi point out: "*We [as readers] have to start thinking again*" (30).

The use of commonplaces in reviewing is an extremely delicate matter, particularly in a field such as African literature which is culturally more distant from European readers than Western literature. This thesis will show that the representation of Africa in European newspaper reviewing has a great deal in common with the representation of the Orient. Both Africa and the Orient are often regarded as 'other' and 'exotic'.

This analysis of national European papers, moreover, aims at showing that reviews of African literature are infrequent. Three, four, perhaps five reviews a year per paper is minimal by comparison with the number of reviews that deal with European, American and (not surprisingly) Japanese literature (31).

This situation seems to point out that the presence of certain countries or geographic areas in the literary pages of newspapers is directly linked with the economic and political power of those areas: in other words, it is both a question of economic and cultural hegemony.

In this piece of research, African literature, with its distance or 'otherness', is intended to be a field in

which to test the vitality of 'committed' reviewing. As will be demonstrated throughout this survey, a reviewer who is able to provide readers with a representation of Africa that is characterized by a (comparatively) wide-ranging approach may be called a 'committed' critic.

### Conclusion

This chapter aimed at introducing the starting point of this thesis: Wole Soyinka's description of literature as a 'joint social operation'.

Newspaper reviewing may be regarded as part and parcel of the above joint social operation. Two aspects of newspaper reviewing (and of reviewing in general) have been tackled in detail in the first half of the chapter.

The first aspect is the relationship Author - Critic(s) - Reader(s) - Translator(s) - Critic(s) - Reader(s) in the wider context of the joint social operation regarded as an organic network expanding in space and time.

The second aspect regards the many possible ways in which a review may be defined. The most appropriate definition in the context of this piece of research has turned up to be that of a review as a text.

The second half of the chapter, instead, has illustrated the debate on the state of reviewing currently taking place in some European countries.

Critics tend to unanimously deplore the current state of reviewing while pointing to a crisis. The crisis is generally described in terms of a weakening of the intellectual energy of criticism caused by increased corporate pressure. .



As a result of the crisis, what is regarded as 'committed' 'traditional' or 'militant' criticism has allegedly disappeared and been replaced by two types of criticism characterized by 'industrial' and 'parade' reviewers.

This thesis will demonstrate that, in spite of the critics' overall pessimism, there is still scope for optimism, in the sense that what is regarded as 'committed'/'militant' criticism continues to exist. In other words, this thesis will aim at demonstrating that reviewers are still able to ignore corporate pressure and to adopt wide-ranging reviewing approaches.

Moreover, in the second part, the main aim of reviewing has been identified as that of informing readers of the value and quality of books, while pointing to their social purpose.

### Notes

- (1) Wole Soyinka, Guardian Conversations, ICA Institute of Contemporary Arts), London, 15 March 1990
- (2) U. Eco, The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the Semiotics of Texts, Hutchinson Univ. Libr., 1979, p. 3
- (3) Ibid., p. 4
- (4) Ibid., p. 5
- (5) Ibid., p. 11
- (6) Ibid., p. 22
- (7) Ibid., p. 23
- (8) Ibid.
- (9) Roland Barthes, Image Music Text Fontana/Flamingo, London, 1984, p. 148
- (10) Ibid., p. 164
- (11) Ibid., p. 161
- (12) Ibid., p. 148
- (13) Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Decolonising the Mind James Currey, London, 1986, p. X
- (14) Ibid., p. 13
- (15) Ibid.
- (16) By 'post-modern' approach Umberto Eco's definition is referred to: *"the post-modern reply [...] consists of recognizing that the past, since it cannot really be destroyed, because its destruction leads to silence, must be revisited: but with irony, not innocently."*

U. Eco, (Postscript to) The Name of the Rose  
Translated from Italian by William Weaver  
Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, New York, 1984,  
pp. 66-67

- (17) Eco, Umberto, 'La recensione come gara di velocità' ('Reviewing as speed-racing') in 'La bustina di Minerva', L'Espresso, Rome, 11 August 1991, p. 154
- (18) Foucault, Michael, 'What is an Author' in Textual Strategies, ed. V. Harari, Methuen, 1980, p. 153
- (19) Ibid. p. 154
- (20) Romano Luperini referring to Umberto Eco <sup>and literary criticism in general</sup> in 'Noi cavalieri inesistenti: i critici italiani si confessano' ('The inexistent knights: confessions of Italian critics'), <sup>quoted</sup> by Paolo di Stefano and Giuseppe Leonelli, in La Repubblica, 17 July 1991, p. 23
- (21) Ibid.
- (22) Ibid.
- (23) <sup>Franco Fortini, quoted in</sup> Ibid.
- (24) Ibid.
- (25) Ibid.
- (26) Eco, Umberto, loc.cit.
- (27) Fortini, Franco, 'Stroncando si impara' ('One learns by slating'), in L'Espresso, 20 October 1991, p. 130
- (28) Kermode, Frank, 'The decline and fall of the readable literary critic', The Guardian, 10 October 1991, p. 25
- (29) Cotroneo, Roberto, 'Apocalittici e degradati' ('Apocalyptic and degraded'), L'Espresso, 12 May 1991, p. 106
- (30) Ibid., p. 110
- (31) The problems affecting African publishing in Europe were underlined at the forum 'Black publishing in Europe' which was part of the

'Colour of Europe', a South Bank Centre festival celebrating the development of world culture in European cities, held in London between 18 and 21 July 1991. At the forum that took place on 18 July four prominent publishers and critics from France (Florence Alexis), Germany (Vusi Mchunu) and Great Britain (Margare Busby, co-founder of the publishing house Allison & Busby and Susheila Nasta, founder editor of 'Wasafiri', a literary magazine) stressed the difficulties that Black and in particular African literature encounter in Europe in their attempt to reach a wide audience.

## CHAPTER TWO

### STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

#### Introduction

The present analysis focuses on the 1980s, starting in 1981 and ending in 1990. As was said in the introduction, the newspapers analysed include some of the main national dailies, together with other papers which represent different ideological stances.

The data (ie reviews) was collected during the second half of 1991 at the Newspaper Library (British Library) in Colindale, North London.

Unfortunately, not all European newspapers are available at the Newspaper Library. Missing, for example, are the French left-wing paper Libération and the Italian Il Corriere della Sera, to mention two newspapers that were originally meant to be included in this analysis. The first one is totally absent and the second is only available up until 1975.

Perhaps Libération would have been more representative of left-wing trends in literary criticism than the French Communist Party newspaper L'Humanité. Similarly, as far as Italian newspapers are concerned, Il Corriere della Sera (published in Milan) possibly would have been more representative than La Stampa (from Turin), although the

latter has a weekly literary pull-out magazine (Tuttolibri). The magazine is quite popular in Italy and does not always reflect the paper's overall political stance (right of centre).

The situation at the Newspaper Library was difficult with regard to Spanish newspapers. Newspapers for the period 1981 to 1984 were undergoing a long-term binding operation and were therefore unavailable.

Moreover, in the case of all newspapers, with the exception of British dailies, every now and then there are gaps. For sometimes weeks at a time papers are missing or the microfilms are in bad condition.

However, in spite of a number of minor difficulties, the ten-year analysis manages to achieve representative (though not fully exhaustive) results. It is still possible to point to the emergence and development of trends in reviewing.

One more preliminary needs to be stated: no reviews of Doris Lessing's books have been included in this survey. Although she is regularly (yearly in some papers) reviewed in all four countries over the ten-year period, her books (at least those reviewed in the last decade) do not belong to her African but to her European experience, which is the reason for the deliberate omission of her reviews.

Another regular presence, especially in British and Italian dailies is the South African writer Wilbur Smith. Deliberately, only one of his reviews - taken from the Italian La Stampa where it appeared in 1981 - has been included in this analysis.

The four newspapers regarded as representative of four European nations are the following:

<u>The Guardian</u>	(Great Britain)
<u>Le Monde</u>	(France)
<u>La Stampa</u>	(Italy)
<u>El País</u>	(Spain)

Unfortunately, El País is only available for the period 1985-1989.

This statistical analysis will look at the newspapers and the reviews from a variety of perspectives. One of the first approaches, however, will be a comparative analysis of four newspapers at five different points in the ten-year period.

The discussion will start by looking at the situation in 1981 as far as the following national dailies are concerned: The Guardian, Le Monde and La Stampa. Subsequently, this situation will be compared with that of 1984. Data for El País is included but relates to 1985. Finally, the situation in 1987, 1989 and 1990 will be taken into account and the emergence of trends will be demonstrated.

Several other newspapers have also been included in this analysis in order to collect as many reviews as possible. The nearly three hundred reviews collected facilitate the compilation of a directory of the reviewing of African literature in four European countries in the period 1981-1990. The directory will be part of the Appendix of this thesis.

Moreover, the inclusion of several newspapers, as was mentioned before, also allows consideration of reviewing from many perspectives, in part thanks to the fact the papers are often representative of certain ideological stances (although reviews do not always reflect the political stance that characterizes the paper in which the article appears).

The left-wing papers included in this research are the following:

<u>The Morning Star</u>	(Great Britain)
<u>L'Humanité</u>	(France)
<u>La Repubblica</u>	(Italy)
<u>Il Manifesto</u>	(Italy)

The above newspapers are available for the period 1985-1990 with the exception of L'Humanité (1985-1989) and Il Manifesto (1986-1989). In the case of Il Manifesto however, those three years represent a particularly significant and fertile period as far as the reviewing of African literature is concerned.

The right-wing (or right-of-centre) newspapers analysed are:

<u>The Daily (and Sunday) Telegraph</u>	(Great Britain)
<u>Le Figaro</u>	(France)
<u>La Stampa</u>	(Italy)
<u>ABC</u>	(Spain)
<u>La Vanguardia</u>	(Spain)

L'Osservatore Romano has also been included as the official newspaper and voice of the Vatican City and therefore the Catholic Church.

In the case of the above newspapers, data is available for the period 1985-1990 with the exception of L'Osservatore Romano and the two Spanish dailies, where the data is only available until 1989.

As far as British newspapers are concerned, The Independent has been included among the representative papers for the period 1986 (ie when it was first published) -1990.



The two tables that follow the introduction to this chapter aim at summarizing the situation.

Table 1 shows the papers that have been chosen as representative of their own countries and the years for which data is available.

Table 2, on the other hand, displays all the newspapers analysed and the years covered in the collection of data.

This chapter will be divided into four Sections.

Section One will deal with the above-mentioned comparative analysis of five points in time.

Section Two will tackle the figure of the Reviewer and will point out those reviewers who are regular (as opposed to occasional) contributors.

Section Three will deal with the frequency of reviewing in relation to each author and book.

Section Four, finally, will focus on the so-called 'minor' authors.



## Tables

### United Kingdom:

The Guardian 1990←—————1981  
The Independent 1990←————1986

### France:

Le Monde 1990←—————1981

### Italy:

La Stampa 1990←—————1981

### Spain:

El País 1989←————1985

TABLE 1: papers regarded as representative of countries  
and periods of data availability

United Kingdom:

<u>Daily/Sunday Tele.</u>	1990←—————1985
<u>The Guardian</u>	1990←—————1981
<u>The Independent</u>	1990←—————1986
<u>The Morning Star</u>	1990←—————1985

France:

<u>Le Figaro</u>	1990←—————1985
<u>Le Monde</u>	1990←—————1981
<u>L'Humanité</u>	1989←—————1985

Italy:

<u>L'Osservatore R.</u>	1989←—————1985
<u>La Stampa</u>	1990←—————1981
<u>La Repubblica</u>	1990←—————1985
<u>Il Manifesto</u>	1988←—————1986

Spain:

<u>ABC</u>	1989←—————1985
<u>La Vanguardia</u>	1989←—————1985
<u>El País</u>	1989←—————1985

TABLE 2: newspapers analysed and years covered in the survey.

## Section One

### A comparison of four newspapers at five points in the decade

#### Statistical data

This comparative analysis is aimed at illustrating the situation of the reviewing of African literature in four representative national newspapers (The Guardian, Le Monde, El País and La Stampa) at five different times in the decade, emphasizing the emergence of reviewing trends.

The five points in the decade are 1981, 1984, 1987, 1989 and 1990.

The situation in 1981 is as follows:

The Guardian: 3 reviews:

Nadine Gordimer (July's People)

Alan Paton (Ah, but your Land is Beautiful)

Nuruddin Farah (Sardines)

Both Nadine Gordimer and Alan Paton are South African. Nuruddin Farah comes from Somalia. The three books were originally written in English.

Le Monde: 3 reviews:

Tahar Ben Jelloun (La prière de l'absent)

Rachid Boudjedra (Le vainqueur de coupe)

Rachid Boudjedra (La répudiation)

The three authors come from North Africa (Maghreb) and their books are written in French.

La Stampa: 1 review:

Wilbur Smith (Il destino del leone)

The author is South African and his book has been translated from English.

The corresponding situation in 1984 is the following:

The Guardian: 3 reviews:

Nadine Gordimer (Something Out There)

Breyten Breytenbach (Mouiroir: Mirrornotes of a Novel)

André Brink (The Wall of the Plague)

Again, all authors reviewed are White South Africans writing either in English or in Afrikaans.

Le Monde: 3 reviews:

Breyten Breytenbach (Confession véridique d'un terroriste albinos)

Mohammed Khaïr-Eddine (Légende et vie d'Agoun'chich)

André Brink (Le mur de la peste)

Two of the authors are White South Africans, whereas Mohammed Khaïr-Eddine comes from North Africa and writes in French.

La Stampa: 1 review:

Wole Soyinka (Aké, gli anni dell'infanzia)

The writer is Nigerian and his book has been translated from English.

The situation in 1987, taking into account the Spanish newspaper El País, is as follows:

The Guardian: 3 reviews:

Nadine Gordimer (A Sport of Nature)  
Amos Tutuola (Pauper, Brawler and Slanderer)  
Chinua Achebe (Anthills of the Savannah)

Nadine Gordimer is a White South African. The remaining two authors come from Nigeria. They all write in English.

The Independent: 2 reviews:

Nadine Gordimer (A Sport of Nature)  
Chinua Achebe (Anthills of the Savannah)

The two writers reviewed by The Independent are the same writers who have been reviewed by The Guardian.

Le Monde: 5 reviews:

Mohammed Kacimi El-Hassani (Le mouchoir)  
Fawzi Mellah (Le conclave des pleureuses)  
Tahar Djaout (L'invention du désert)  
Rabah Belamri (Regard blessé)  
Tahar Ben Jelloun (La nuit sacrée)

All the above authors come from the Maghreb countries and are writers of either French or Arabic (or both).

El País: 3 reviews:

Nadine Gordimer (Ocasión de amar)  
Nadine Gordimer (La hija de Burger)

Wole Soyinka (El hombre ha muerto)

The three books have been translated from English. One of the authors is a White South African, the other is a Nigerian.

La Stampa: 2 reviews:

Gabriel Okara (La voce)

Wole Soyinka (plays)

Both writers are Nigerians of English expression.

The situation in 1989 is as follows:

The Guardian: 4 reviews:

Ngugi Wa Thiong'o (Matigari)

Breyten Breytenbach (Memory of Snow and of Dust)

Tahar Ben Jelloun (The Sacred Night)

Elsa Joubert (The Last Sunday)

One author comes from Kenya and his book has been translated from Gikuyu. Another is a Moroccan writer of French expression while the two remaining writers come from South Africa (writing in English and/or Afrikaans).

The Independent: 4 reviews:

Ngugi wa Thiong'o (Matigari)

Timothy Wangusa (Upon this Mountain)

Nawal El Saadawi (The Circling Song)

Breyten Breytenbach (Memory of Snow and of Dust)

Two of the books (those by Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Breyten Breytenbach), once again, coincide with those reviewed by The Guardian. The remaining books come from Egypt (translated from Arabic) and Subsaharan Africa (Uganda).

Wangusa is a writer of English expression.

Le Monde: 5 reviews:

Rachid Mimouni (L'honneur de la tribu)

Naguib Mahfouz (La chanson des gueux)

Naguib Mahfouz (Dérives sur le Nil)

Naguib Mahfouz (Le jardin du passé)

Rabah Belamri (L'asile de pierre)

Two of the authors come from the Maghreb. Three books (translated from Arabic) by Naguib Mahfouz are also reviewed, most probably under what might be called 'the Nobel Prize effect'.

El País: 5 reviews:

John Michael Coetzee (Foe)

Naguib Mahfouz (Dialogadas: 1967-1971)

Naguib Mahfouz: (Amor bajo la lluvia)

John Michael Coetzee (Esperando a los barbaros)

Naguib Mahfouz (Historias de nuestro barrio)

The 'Nobel Prize effect' seems to be manifest among the reviews published by the Madrid daily. There are three reviews of Naguib Mahfouz's books (translated from Arabic or English), followed by two articles on books by the White South African author John Michael Coetzee (translated from English).

La Stampa: 7 reviews:

Mohammed Choukri (Il pane nudo)

Mike Nicol (Per ordini superiori)

Naguib Mahfouz (Vicolo del Mortaio)

Sipho Sepamla (Soweto)

Breyten Breytenbach (Le veritiere confessioni di un africano albino)

André Brink (Un'arida stagione bianca)



Tahar Ben Jelloun (Giorno di silenzio a Tangeri)

The 'Nobel Prize effect' does not seem to be as strong as amongst the other newspapers. There is only one review of Naguib Mahfouz's books. Two books come from Morocco, although only one of them (Mohammed Choukri's ) has been translated from Arabic. Tahar Ben Jelloun's book has been translated from French, its author being a Paris-based Moroccan writer of both French and Arabic expression. The three remaining books come from South Africa and have been translated from English.

Finally, the situation in 1990 is as follows::

The Guardian: 4 reviews:

Wole Soyinka (Isara: a Voyage around Essay)

Naguib Mahfouz (Palace Walk)

Nadine Gordimer (My Son's Story)

John Michael Coetzee (Age of Iron)

One notices a kind of double, perhaps belated, Nobel Prize effect (Naguib's Mahfouz's book translated from Arabic and Wole Soyinka's latest book). Nadine Gordimer went on to be one of the winners shortly afterwards. However, she had always been a regular presence in most European newspapers analysed, regardless of international literary awards). The other writer reviewed is an author of English expression who comes from South Africa (John Michael Coetzee).

The Independent: 4 reviews:

Naguib Mahfouz (Palace Walk)

Wole Soyinka (Isara: a Voyage around Essay)

Nadine Gordimer (My Son's Story)

John Michael Coetzee (Age of Iron)

Again, the authors and books reviewed are the same as

those reviewed by The Guardian.

Le Monde: 6 reviews:

Tahar Ben Jelloun (Jour de silence à Tanger)

Ahmadou Kourouma (Monné, outrages et défis)

Nadine Gordimer (Un caprice de la nature)

Henri Lopes (Le chercheur d'Afriques)

Chinua Achebe (Les termitières de la savane)

Rabah Belamri (Mémoire en archipel)

The above list includes two books that have been translated from English. One of them comes from Nigeria (Chinua Achebe), the other from South Africa (Nadine Gordimer). The remaining books were originally written by writers of French coming from the Maghreb countries (Rabah Belamri and Tahar Ben Jelloun), the Congo (Henri Lopes) and Ivory Coast (Ahmadou Kourouma).

La Stampa: 6 reviews:

José Luandino Vieira (Luuanda)

Chinua Achebe (Il crollo/Ormai a disagio)

Sony Labou Tansi (La vita e mezza)

Cristiana Pugliese (ed.) (Racconti africani)

Amos Tutuola (Povero, baruffone e malandrino)

Tahar Ben Jelloun (Le pareti della solitudine)

Besides the collection of (Black) African short stories edited by Cristiana Pugliese and translated mainly from English, there is a significant variety of books. José Luandino Vieira's book comes from Angola and has been translated from Portuguese. Two books come from Nigeria and have been translated from English, their authors being Chinua Achebe and Amos Tutuola respectively. Tahar Ben Jelloun's novel has been translated from French and comes from Morocco, whereas the book by the Congolese writer Sony Labou Tansi was originally written in French.

Table 3 and the graph that follows it (both appear at the end of this section) aim at summarizing the situation that has just been described. The table shows the number of books reviewed in each paper in 1981, 1984, 1987, 1989 and, finally, 1990. The graph, on the other hand, is meant to show the way reviewing trends developed in the decade as far as the four newspapers analysed were concerned.

### Comparative analysis

A close look at both Table 3 and the graph immediately point to the fact that the reviewing of African literature has been on the increase in the four European newspapers in the period 1981-1990.

At the same time it points to a major difference between The Guardian and Le Monde on the one hand, and La Stampa and El País on the other.

In both the British and the French daily, African literature was already being regularly reviewed in the first four years of the decade (three books were reviewed on average each year), whereas in the Spanish and Italian papers it was quite rare for African books to be reviewed at all in the same period. In La Stampa only one review per year can be found in both 1981 and 1984. In El País, in spite of the fact that data are unavailable for the first half of the decade, one can point to the sudden appearance of reviews of African literature after 1985.

Both the Italian and the Spanish newspapers show that the trend has increased consistently after 1985. The following are the data available for El País: three reviews per year in both 1986 and 1987, increasing to four reviews in 1988 and, finally, reaching five reviews in 1989.

In the Italian newspaper, on the other hand, one finds one review per year in both 1981 and 1984. The number of articles increases to two in 1987, and then, suddenly, to seven and six per year in 1989 and 1990 respectively.

The Guardian and Le Monde, the papers in which the reviewing of African literature is already well-established in the early 1980s, are published in the European countries with the strongest links with the African continent, through a strong colonial past in Africa.

Italy and Spain, on the other hand, were only involved to a minor extent in the colonial experience, at least as far as Africa is concerned.

There is a relatively new interest in African literature, noticeable in the second half of the decade in papers such as La Stampa and El País, as well as an increased number of reviews in The Guardian and Le Monde. This may be a reflection of global literary events such as the Nobel Prize being awarded to two African writers (Naguib Mahfouz and Wole Soyinka, soon to be followed by another African writer, Nadine Gordimer in 1991, almost to confirm a tendency for the Nobel Prize to be awarded to writers from the Third World) in the second half of the decade.

A look at the titles of the books reviewed confirms the significance of the Nobel prize.

The situation in 1981 may be interpreted as follows. As far as La Stampa is concerned, one might point to a lack of real interest in African literature. The only book reviewed might be taken as an example of 'easy' literature, one that indulges in representations characterized by 'exotic otherness'.

In both Le Monde and The Guardian, on the other hand, the stronger interest in African literature seems to reflect the colonial past and the present links with African countries. One of the most relevant amongst these links is the language, a factor that also seems to imply that little money is spent in translating works of African literature.

The cultural industry somehow seems to take advantage of the fact that a certain kind of African literature (that written in English as far as Great Britain is concerned, and that of French expression in the case of France) is ready to be channelled into a considerable part of the European (and Western in general) market.

In 1984, the situation does not seem to have changed a great deal. The Guardian and Le Monde still have three reviews each.

The situation can be summarized as follows: The Guardian still tends to give priority to White South African authors (writing in English and/or Afrikaans). Le Monde only reviews one writer from former French colonies (Mohammed Khaïr-Eddine comes from Morocco), whereas it tends to be more open towards White literature from South Africa (André Brink and Breyten Breytenbach).

As far as La Stampa is concerned, reviews of African literature still remain a rare event; however, Wilbur Smith has been replaced by Wole Soyinka, which might mark the beginning of an awakening, a new interest in African literature, meant as a literature not necessarily characterized by exoticism.

A look at the situation in 1987 (ie after the Nobel Prize was awarded to Wole Soyinka) shows that the above trends are further confirmed and strengthened.

The Guardian still gives priority to reviews of African literature of English expression although two thirds of the authors are now Black Africans (Amos Tutuola and Chinua Achebe). As far as Nadine Gordimer is concerned, she remains the White South African author most regularly reviewed by The Guardian.

The Independent has meanwhile become a very popular, and therefore representative, progressive newspaper in Great Britain. A look at the reviews published in the same year reveals a strong similarity with The Guardian at least as far as the choice of authors is concerned.

Le Monde, on the other hand, seems to have returned to its traditional interest in Francophone Africa, or rather North Africa since all the authors reviewed in 1987 come from Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria (Maghreb).

El País, in a country where African literature is something new, meanwhile tends to give priority to the 'giants' of African literature, both Black and White. Nadine Gordimer and Wole Soyinka, predictably, are the dominant writers reviewed in the Madrid newspaper.

La Stampa continues its discovery of African literature, in parallel with what is happening in El País. Wole Soyinka and Gabriel Okara are the two authors reviewed in the Turin daily.

The reviews that appear in the Italian and Spanish newspapers in this period have a strong 'introductory' flavour in the sense that they are aware that they are reviewing African literature for the first time.

Finally, moving on towards the end of the decade (1989), the following changes are of note.

In The Guardian, the dominance of White South African writing has lessened. There appears a more varied and cosmopolitan interest in Black African literature and Francophone literature from North Africa.

The number of reviews that appear in The Independent is the same as in The Guardian. Two of the books reviewed are the same as in The Guardian. André Brink is replaced by a Black writer of English expression from Uganda, Timothy Wangusa. The only woman present in The Guardian is replaced by another woman in The Independent: the Egyptian writer Nawal El Saadawi.

At this time, Le Monde is very busy discovering the Nobel Prize winner Naguib Mahfouz. Three of his books are reviewed in 1989.

However, the most interesting situation is to be found in El País and La Stampa where African literature - and this confirms the trends pointed out earlier on in this section - by 1989 seems to have become much more popular.

El País has five reviews. The presence of three books by Naguib Mahfouz demonstrates the significance of the Nobel Prize effect. The two remaining books come from South Africa and are both written by John Michael Coetzee. This confirms the existence of a new interest in previously unknown (at least as far as the Madrid daily is concerned) writers from Africa.

La Stampa reaches a total of seven reviews that show a varied interest in African literature. There is a book by Naguib Mahfouz (again, the Nobel Prize effect), followed by four books from South Africa and, finally, two books

from North Africa.

A final look at 1990 seems to point to the fact that the trends previously identified have all settled by the end of the decade. In particular, this means that the two Nobel Prizes awarded to African writers (Wole Soyinka from Nigeria and Naguib Mahfouz from Egypt) have had a significant effect, perhaps worldwide.

It is also clear that African literature has made an entrée into the two European newspapers (La Stampa and El País) where it had been previously ignored.

Towards the end of the decade, all newspapers seem to publish a constant number of reviews of African literature: up to five reviews appear every year in most dailies. Long-established attitudes (such as the interest in Francophone literature in the case of Le Monde and that in Anglophone literature for what concerns The Guardian) seem to have been partly replaced by more varied approaches, although the White South African presence has remained significant in Great Britain.

In 1990 The Guardian and The Independent have four reviews each. The reviews deal with exactly the same books by Wole Soyinka, Naguib Mahfouz, Nadine Gordimer and, finally, John Michael Coetzee. One could perhaps venture to say that the Nobel Prize effect could hardly be stronger.

Le Monde has six reviews in the same period. Two of the books reviewed, by Nadine Gordimer and Chinua Achebe, have been translated from English. Two more writers come from Francophone Black Africa: Ahmadou Kourouma and Henri Lopes. The remaining authors are Tahar Ben Jelloun and Rabah Belamri. They represent the strong regular presence of North African writing (in both French and Arabic) among the reviews published by this Paris daily.



Unfortunately, no data is available for El País for 1990. However, on the basis of the trends identified in the course of the decade, one might venture to predict that the same interest in African literature that can be detected in La Stampa is most likely to characterize the Madrid daily as well.

La Stampa has six reviews in the same period. One of the books reviewed is written by Paris-based Moroccan Tahar Ben Jelloun. The remaining books are all linked with Black Subsaharan Africa.

### Conclusion

This section, a comparative analysis of four newspapers at five points in the decade aimed at both illustrating the situation of reviewing for each individual paper and pointing to the emergence of reviewing trends.

If the papers are regarded as representative of the situation in their countries (their representativeness resulting from their widespread circulation and popularity), then the validity of the reviewing trends that have emerged might be applied on a national or perhaps supranational level.

The main point that has been emphasized is that the reviewing of African literature has been on the increase in all four newspapers in the decade analysed.

Moreover, a significant difference has been identified, as far as reviewing attitudes are concerned, between papers published in countries with a strong colonial past

(ie Great Britain and France) and papers published in other countries, which were not involved in the colonization of Africa other than to a minor extent (ie Spain and Italy).

In the latter countries the reviewing of African literature may be regarded as something 'new', perhaps as a new 'cultural' fashion partly resulting from the emergence of new forms of cultural 'Third-Worldism' in the second half of the decade, or perhaps from the powerful impact of the Nobel Prize.

The large-scale impact of the Nobel Prize has been pointed out together with its capability to determine the orientation of the cultural market world-wide.

Another trend that has been identified is the tendency for both The Guardian and Le Monde to abandon certain reviewing attitudes that characterized these two papers in the first half of the decade.

In the first half of the decade, both papers displayed some kind of idiosyncrasy (one could even talk of a certain degree of insularity) as far as the selection of the books to be reviewed is concerned. Both papers tended to give priority to books coming from former colonies of their own countries and to leave the literature of other parts of the African continent virtually ignored. The most apparent result was a kind of mutual deliberate ignorance.

In the second half of the decade, however, things began to change in both papers. In The Guardian reviews of books by Francophone writers such as Abdelhak Serhane and Tahar Ben Jelloun began to appear. Meanwhile, Le Monde reviewed Anglophone writers such as Chinua Achebe and Amos Tutuola. In both papers, however, at the end of the decade, the reviewing of African literature is still characterized by a certain degree of insularity,

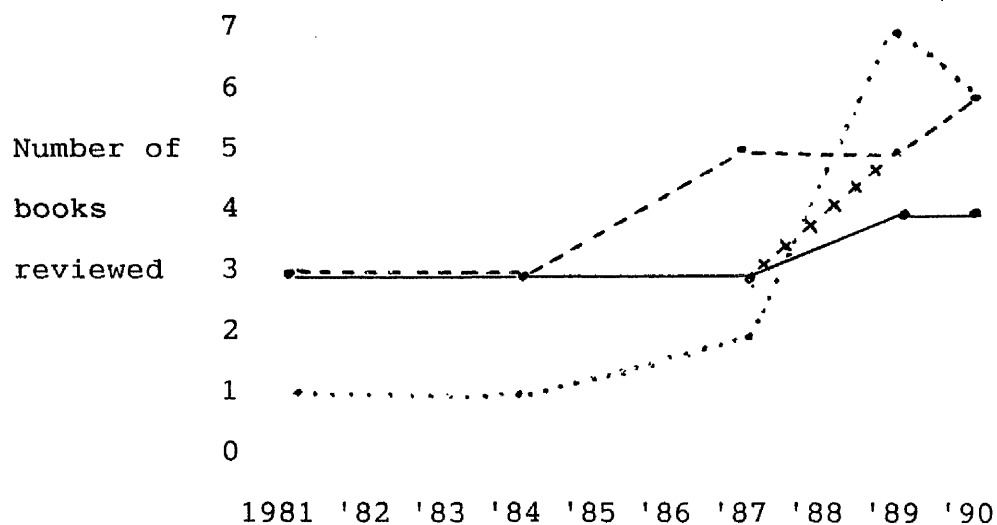
particularly in comparison with El País and La Stampa, two papers characterized by relatively open attitudes due to the previous lack of any reviewing trends as far as African literature is concerned.

Chapter Three will be a follow-up to this section. It will adopt a more comprehensive perspective (taking all newspapers into account) in order to find out whether the validity of the trends identified in this section also applies to papers that originate from ideologically opposite areas and that do not have a widespread circulation.

Table and graph

(years)	1981	1984	1987	1989	1990
The Guardian	3	3	3	4	4
The Independent	-	-	2	4	4
Le Monde	3	3	5	5	6
La Stampa	1	1	2	7	6
El País	N/A	N/A	3	5	N/A

TABLE 3: number of books reviewed by each paper in 1981,  
1984, 1987, 1989 and 1990



Graph displaying the reviewing trends identified in  
Chapter Two Section One:

\_\_\_\_\_ The Guardian  
 ----- Le Monde  
 ..... La Stampa  
 ++++++ El País

## Section Two

### Identification of 'regular' reviewers

This part of the statistical analysis aims at singling out a number of reviewers who may be regarded as regular contributors to newspapers.

71 reviews (out of 294 that have been analysed) were written by regular contributors.

In some cases, the critics' contribution to newspapers lasts several years. Consequently, it is possible to observe the relatively long-term development of their reviewing approaches and techniques.

Chapter Seven will be a follow-up to this section, since it will consist of an analysis of the style, technique and stock-themes of a number of regular contributors selected amongst those singled out in this section.

Table 4, at the end of this section, will provide a list of the most regular contributors together with the names of the newspapers, the number of reviews that have been found for each critic and, finally, the period their contribution can be attributed to. In fact, Table 4 will be the starting point for the above-mentioned analysis of individual reviewing styles in Chapter Seven.

The data available allows one to point to a tendency for left-wing and progressive newspapers to be characterized by the presence of regular reviewers. This certainly applies to Il Manifesto, The Morning Star and

L'Humanité. However, to a minor extent, it also applies to Le Monde and The Guardian.

Most right-wing and right-of-centre newspapers, on the other hand, (with the only exception of La Stampa, whose literary pull-out magazine Tuttolibri does not reflect the overall political stance of the newspaper) do not seem to be characterized by the presence of regular contributors (The Daily Telegraph, Le Figaro, ABC). Therefore, they tend to resort to occasional contributors.

One of the most interesting aspects of regular reviewing is that it provides critics with an opportunity to develop a whole discourse. In some cases it will be an extremely coherent discourse, as will be shown in Chapter Seven, that may last for years.

Sometimes the reviews written by a regular contributor, taken as a whole, may be read as a compact text that in some cases constitutes an introduction to African literature.

It is at the level of regular contribution that a critic finds himself in a position to introduce African literature in a 'certain', often strictly personal way, by means of a very personal selection of authors and books.

As can be seen from the data displayed in Table 4, Cristiana Pugliese may be regarded as the most 'regular' contributor. In the relatively short period between February 1986 and October 1988, she wrote at least 25 reviews of African literature for the Rome daily Il Manifesto.

Cristiana Pugliese's contribution to Il Manifesto is characterized by the highest frequency of reviewing of African literature in the whole decade as far as the

newspapers analysed are concerned. Taken as a whole, her reviews represent an introduction to African literature addressed to readers in a country where the newspaper reviewing of African literature may be considered as something relatively new.

Cristiana Pugliese's activity can be put in context by means of a reference to the trends underlined in the previous section of this chapter (ie the emergence in the second half of the decade of an interest in African literature in the two countries that are not characterized by a significant colonial past or post-colonial present).

The second most regular reviewer is Chris Searle. In the period 1986-1990 (ie since he started working for the British Communist daily newspaper The Morning Star), he has written at least 11 reviews of African literature, thus developing his own personal discourse on the subject. Due to the situation in Great Britain, where reviews of books coming from Africa do not represent a relatively new cultural event, his reviews, even taken as a whole, have much less of an introductory flavour, especially in comparison with Cristiana Pugliese's writing.

Cristiana Pugliese and Chris Searle are followed, in third place, by Tahar Ben Jelloun, a Paris-based Moroccan writer who also works as a reviewer for Le Monde. Ten reviews by Tahar Ben Jelloun have been found in the period 1983-1989. However, most or perhaps all of his reviews deal with books that come from the Maghreb countries (ie countries for which he can claim a deep and first-hand knowledge).

Again, as in the case of Chris Searle, Tahar Ben Jelloun's reviews, even taken as a whole, do not seem to have any kind of introductory flavour. This is also due to the fact that the reviewing of North African literature has



already been long-established in France.

Nine reviews have been found for both Norman Shrapnel (The Guardian) and Claudio Gorlier (La Stampa) for the periods 1981-1989 and 1983-1990 respectively.

Finally, another Guardian contributor, Christopher Wordsworth, has reviewed at least six books of African literature in the period 1981-1989, whereas Claude Prévost has written an equal number of reviews for the French L'Humanité in the period 1985-1989.

The presence of Tahar Ben Jelloun leads one to another aspect of reviewing.

In the discussion of the current debate on newspaper reviewing that was tackled in Chapter One, a critic (Franco Fortini) referred to the figure of the 'parade' critic. By 'parade' critic he meant the kind of highly paid and much sought after (by newspapers) reviewer who is able to 'provide the icing on the cake', where the cake in question was the corporate-oriented and -dominated cultural industry.

According to Franco Fortini, 'parade' reviewers tend to be well-established public personae (ie writers who are well-known in their own countries or on an international level, such as Nobel Prize winners etc.) who are able to capture the readers' attention simply because of the status of their name.

This thesis is not concerned with finding out whether the reviews written by the so-called 'parade' critics really represent 'the icing on the cake'. Moreover, such statements and generalized 'accusations' tend to have a strong subjective flavour, being characterized by elements of personal judgement not necessarily based on or resulting from a comparative analysis.

This discussion, with its comparative approach, is only interested in pointing out the presence of a number of public personae (regardless of both the motives that have led the newspapers to use such reviewers and the amount of money the critics have been paid for their service) who seem to be occasionally acting as reviewers and whose own presence dominates the review.

What follows is a list of public personae (mostly well-known writers) identified among the reviewers analysed:

Jorge Amado (Le Figaro): one review  
Tahar Ben Jelloun (Le Monde): ten reviews  
Nadine Gordimer (La Stampa): one review  
Salman Rushdie (The Guardian): one review  
Rachid Boudjedra (Le Figaro): one review  
J M C Le Clezio (Le Monde): one review  
Emma Tennant (The Guardian): one review  
Alice Thomas Ellis (The Guardian): one review

The main purpose of this section was to single out a number of regular contributors. Eight reviewers have been thus identified, while their activity has been contextualized taking into account the trends identified in the previous section. Some of the critics' styles, techniques and stock-themes will be the object of a detailed analysis in Chapter Seven.

Finally, the presence of the so-called 'parade' reviewers has been pointed out, although their status in terms of 'public personality' does not have any further relevance in this analysis.

Table

Reviewer and paper:	Number of reviews:	Period:
1. Cristiana Pugliese ( <u>Il Manifesto</u> )	25	1986-88
2. Chris Searle ( <u>The Morning Star</u> )	11	1986-90
3. Tahar Ben Jelloun ( <u>Le Monde</u> )	10	1983-89
4. Norman Shrapnel ( <u>The Guardian</u> )	9	1981-89
5. Claudio Gorlier ( <u>La Stampa</u> )	9	1983-90
6. Claude Prévost ( <u>L'Humanité</u> )	6	1985-89
7. Christopher Wordsworth ( <u>The Guardian</u> )	6	1981-89

TABLE 4: regular contributors, newspapers, number of reviews and period of contribution

### Section Three

#### The frequency of reviewing in relation to authors and books.

This section aims at identifying those authors and books that have been most frequently reviewed during the decade 1981-1990 in the newspapers and countries taken into account.

Table 5, at the end of this section, shows what could be defined<sup>as</sup> the 'top 16' of African literature, set up on the basis of the reviews analysed.

It is significant that 19 African writers suffice to cover 218 (out of 294) reviews. Moreover, 136 reviews (among the 210 that deal with 19 authors) deal with a very limited number of authors: 6 authors in fact.

Two of the six authors, the top two, not surprisingly, are the Nobel Prize winners (Nadine Gordimer and Naguib Mahfouz). The other Nobel Prize winner, Wole Soyinka, a Black African, finds himself in sixth position.

Wole Soyinka is the first Black African author to be found in the 'top-16', followed by Amos Tutuola, Chinua Achebe, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o and Ben Okri, who occupy the 8th, 9th and 11th positions (both Ben Okri and Ngugi Wa Thiong'o have six reviews each).

The authors that occupy the first six positions are Nadine Gordimer (with 34 reviews), Naguib Mahfouz (28 reviews), John Michael Coetzee (19 reviews), Tahar Ben

Jelloun (17 reviews), André Brink (15 reviews) and Wole Soyinka (12 reviews, not including articles written on the occasion of his Nobel Prize award).

The above writers are immediately followed by Breyten Breytenbach (10 reviews), Amos Tutuola (9 reviews), Chinua Achebe and Rachid Boudjedra (8 reviews each), Ben Okri and Ngugi wa Thiong'o (both in 11th position with 6 reviews each), Nawal El Saadawi and Abdelhak Serhane (5 reviews each), Assia Djebar (4 reviews).

Finally, the sixteenth position (perhaps, one is already dealing with 'minor' writers due to the limited number of reviews) is occupied by Elsa Joubert, Rachid Mimouni, Fawzi Mellah and Rabah Belamri with 3 reviews each.

Table 5 also provides a picture of the geographic distribution and genders of the 19 authors.

Significantly, only 4 women can be found amongst the 19 authors. One of the women, however, claims the top position (Nadine Gordimer). The other women only appear in 13th, 15th and 16th position respectively. None of them, incidentally, is a Black African. Two of them are White South Africans, whereas the remaining two are North Africans.

On the other hand, 15 men are part of the list, although only 5 of them come from Black Africa. They can be found in 6th, 8th, 9th and 11th position. Seven of the male authors come from North Africa. Apart from Naguib Mahfouz, who comes from Egypt and may be found in 2nd position (probably as a result of the Nobel Prize effect), the 6 remaining come from former French colonies (Morocco and Algeria). The remaining male authors, John Michael Coetzee, André Brink and Breyten Breytenbach, are White South Africans.

The fact that 218 reviews deal with only 19 authors means that the remaining reviews (76, in fact) deal with some sixty authors and a few editors. In other words, one can point to the presence of a very large number of 'minor' writers.

It may be interesting to look at these so-called 'minor' writers, in order to find out who they are, which part of Africa they come from, in which European countries they tend to be reviewed and in what languages they write. This will be the object of Section Four in this chapter.

A look at Table 6 will show the geographical distribution of the reviews, as far as the first 15 authors are concerned (ie not including the 4 authors with only three reviews each amongst the 19 authors included in Table 5).

The data seems to point to the existence of a limited number of authors who can claim a real international status. In fact, the seven authors who can do so are Nadine Gordimer, Naguib Mahfouz, Wole Soyinka, John Michael Coetzee, Tahar Ben Jelloun, André Brink and, finally, Breyten Breytenbach.

Not surprisingly the first three authors are the Nobel Prize winners. The high number of reviews available in each country for each of these authors can thus be explained as a result of their international success, which in its turn results from the Nobel Prize effect.

Three of the authors who are internationally well-known, in spite of not having been awarded any Nobel Prize ('not yet' one might say), are White South Africans (John Michael Coetzee, André Brink and Breyten Breytenbach), whereas the other one is Tahar Ben Jelloun.

If one leaves aside the above seven writers (perhaps they

can be considered the 'giants' of African literature, at least on the basis of media attention, ie the number of reviews) the distribution of the reviews of the remaining authors would seem to reflect the colonial past, in some cases, or the relatively new interest in African literature, in other countries.

The trends already identified in Section One of the present chapter would thus seem to be confirmed. The existence of post-colonial 'priority' links would explain the presence of 7 reviews of Rachid Boudjedra in France (as opposed to none in Great Britain or Spain and one in Italy) or the presence of 6 reviews of Ben Okri, all of them in Great Britain.

On the other hand, signs of new, more open approaches might be perceived in the presence of 2 reviews of both Abdelhak Serhane and Assia Djebar (writers of French expression) in Great Britain or, for instance, the presence of 5 reviews of Amos Tutuola, 3 of Chinua Achebe and, finally, one of Rachid Boudjedra in Italy.

Table Six also aims at illustrating the enthusiasm with which the reviewing of African literature has been tackled in countries such as Spain and Italy. At the same time, it points to a major difference between these two countries, a difference that was missed in the previous analysis in Section One, due to the different perspective adopted.

Although both Italy and Spain discover African literature (under the Nobel Prize effect or under the effect of new forms of cultural Third-Worldisms) in the second half of the decade, reviewers in Spain tend to concentrate on the introduction of the so-called 'giants' of African literature (11 reviews of Nadine Gordimer, 14 of Naguib Mahfouz, 8 of John Michael Coetzee would prove this point), whereas in Italy critics tend to be more interested in 'minor' figures or at least in

introducing as many African writers as possible, in order to illustrate as many aspects as possible of African literature. In Italy, for instance, there are 'only' 9 reviews of Nadine Gordimer and 5 of Naguib Mahfouz, as opposed to 11 and 14 respectively in Spain.

Moreover, 43 of the reviews that can be found in Spain in the decade only deal with 6 authors, whereas 46 of the reviews that can be found in Italy deal with twice the number of authors.

Having so far identified the authors who are most frequently reviewed and the geographical distribution of their reviews, one can now turn to the identification of the books most frequently reviewed.

Among the 218 reviews that deal with the 19 major writers, one can find a number of books that have achieved a real European circulation in the sense that they are available, on the basis of the fact that they have been reviewed, in all four countries analysed, in original or in translation.

Table 7 contains the seven books translated in all four countries and the two books available only in three countries.

Nadine Gordimer's books A Sport of Nature and Something Out There, not surprisingly, can be found in first position (with a total of 13 reviews), followed by John Michael Coetzee's The Life and Times of Michael K. and Foe (12 reviews altogether) and, still in second position, with an equal number of reviews, Tahar Ben Jelloun's L'enfant de sable and La nuit sacrée. Naguib Mahfouz can be found in third position with a total of 8 reviews of his book Palace Walk

The two books available in at least three countries are A Chain of Voices by André Brink and The True Confessions of



an Albino Terrorist by Breyten Breytenbach. Both books are reviewed in France, Italy and Great Britain.

The data shows that the books with the most widespread circulation are the works of Nobel Prize winners, although Wole Soyinka seems to be excluded, at least on the basis of the reviews and the period analysed. As far as the remaining books are concerned, three of them come from White South Africa and one from North Africa. This means that, for what concerns the papers analysed, no Black African writer has achieved a real European circulation. Moreover, this seems to imply that what is usually defined 'African literature' in Europe, in fact, is the product of only a few countries, White South Africa and North African countries in particular.

As far as the linguistic distribution of these books is concerned, the data displayed in Table 7 points to the domination of English (Nadine Gordimer and John Michael Coetzee), followed by French (Tahar Ben Jelloun) and Arabic (Naguib Mahfouz).

The data also points to the fact that English is the language that dominates in the market of translation. Looking at the seven books available in all four languages, the data shows that there have been 21 translations commissioned by European publishers: 12 of them with English as a source language, 6 with French, whereas only 2 were translated from Arabic. This data provides a rough idea of the way translation trends are oriented in the European cultural industry in the decade 1981-1990.

Finally, a look at the linguistic breakdown of all 19 authors who seem to be more regularly or frequently reviewed might be of some relevance at this point.

The data shown in Table 8 confirms the fact that English remains the dominant language (with a total of ten

authors, including bilingual authors or authors who are capable of writing in two languages, such as Ngugi wa Thiong'o, whose latest novel Matigari was originally written in Gikuyu, and some White South African writers such as Breyten Breytenbach and André Brink whose books have been translated from English or Afrikaans).

French is the second most frequent source language with a total of seven writers, although they include some North African writers who are able to write in both Arabic and French.

Only three cases of Afrikaans as source language may be found, followed by Arabic (two authors, both Egyptians) and, finally, one case of Gikuyu as source language.

This data hardly needs comment. It confirms the current status of English and French as dominant source languages in the field of African literature. At the same time, it illustrates the present rôle of the literatures written in African languages other than English and French.

### Conclusion

This section aimed at identifying both the authors and the books which were most frequently or regularly reviewed during the period 1981-1990. To this aim, a 'top-16' has been compiled, containing the 19 authors who are the subject of the overwhelming majority of reviews.

Subsequently, the geographical distribution of the above authors as well as their genders have been analysed, pointing out the presence of only 4 women amongst the 19 authors.

The analysis of the geographical distribution of the

reviews has disclosed the fact that only a very limited number of African writers may claim any real European circulation. As a whole, the situation seems to be characterized by the domination of links resulting from the colonial past in some countries as well as by the Nobel Prize effect on a larger scale.

Post-colonial 'priority links' are particularly manifest in the case of France and Great Britain, whereas in Spain and Italy more open approaches have been detected as far as the newspaper reviews of African literature are concerned. However, a major difference has been identified between trends in Italy and Spain concerning the choice of African authors.

Finally, the domination of White South African and North African literature (and, consequently, the absence of Black African literature) has been pointed out in the analysis of the books that have achieved a widespread European circulation.

The data concerning the frequency of reviewing provided in this section constitutes the (statistical) background against which the mainly thematic analysis of Chapters Four, Five and Six will be carried out.

# Tables

<u>pos.</u>	<u>author</u>	<u>rev.</u>	<u>origin</u>	<u>gender</u>
1st	Nadine Gordimer	34	WSA	F
2nd	Naguib Mahfouz	28	NA	M
3rd	John Michael Coetzee	19	WSA	M
4th	Tahar Ben Jelloun	17	NA	M
5th	André Brink	15	WSA	M
6th	Wole Soyinka	12	BA	M
7th	Breyten Breytenbach	10	WSA	M
8th	Amos Tutuola	9	BA	M
9th	Chinua Achebe	8	BA	M
9th	Rachid Boudjedra	8	NA	M
11th	Ben Okri	6	BA	M
11th	Ngugi wa Thiong'o	6	BA	M
13th	Nawal El Saadawi	5	NA	F
13th	Abdelhak Serhane	5	NA	M
15th	Assia Djebar	4	NA	F
16th	Elsa Joubert	3	WSA	F
16th	Rachid Mimouni	3	NA	M
16th	Fawzi Mellah	3	NA	M
16th	Rabah Belamri	3	NA	M
Tot:	<u>19 authors</u>	<u>218 rev.</u>	<u>9NA/5WSA/5BA</u>	<u>15M/4F</u>

TABLE 5: the 19 authors more frequently reviewed, the number of reviews identified for each author, the author's geographic origin and gender.

<u>authors:</u>	<u>Number of reviews per country:</u>			
	<u>G.Britain</u>	<u>France</u>	<u>Italy</u>	<u>Spain</u>
Nadine Gordimer	9	5	9	11
Naguib Mahfouz	3	6	5	14
Wole Soyinka	5	3	10	6
John Michael Coetzee	6	3	2	8
Tahar Ben Jelloun	3	7	4	3
André Brink	7	5	2	1
Breyten Breytenbach	5	2	3	-
Rachid Boudjedra	-	7	1	-
Amos Tutuola	5	3	1	-
Chinua Achebe	4	1	3	-
Ben Okri	6	-	-	-
Ngugi wa Thiong'o	5	-	1	-
Nawal El Saadawi	5	-	-	-
Abdelhak Serhane	2	3	-	-
Assia Djebar	2	1	1	-
TOTAL	65	44	46	43

TABLE 6: Geographical distribution of the reviews concerning the fifteen authors who are most frequently reviewed.

<u>pos.</u>	<u>Author and book:</u>	<u>Number of reviews</u>			
		<u>GB</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>S</u>	<u>I</u>
1st	Nadine Gordimer				
	<u>A Sport of Nature</u>	4	1	1	1
	<u>Something Out There</u>	1	2	2	1
2nd	John Michael Coetzee				
	<u>Foe</u>	2	1	3	1
	<u>The Life and Times of M.K</u>	1	1	2	1
2nd	Tahar Ben Jelloun				
	<u>La nuit sacrée</u>	2	3	1	1
	<u>L'enfant de sable</u>	1	2	1	1
3rd	Naguib Mahfouz				
	<u>Palace Walk</u>	3	2	2	1
4th	Breyten Breytenbach				
	<u>The true confessions...</u>	1	1	-	2
5th	André Brink				
	<u>A chain of Voices</u>	1	1	-	1

TABLE 7: distribution of reviews of books with widespread circulation

<u>Author:</u>	<u>Country:</u>	<u>Language(s):</u>
Nadine Gordimer	South Africa	English
Naguib Mahfouz	Egypt	Arabic
John Michael Coetzee	South Africa	English
Tahar Ben Jelloun	Morocco/France	French/Arabic
André Brink	South Africa	Afrikaans/Engl.
Wole Soyinka	Nigeria	English
Breyten Breytenbach	South Africa	Afrikaans/Engl.
Amos Tutuola	Nigeria	English
Chinua Achebe	Nigeria	English
Rachid Boudjedra	Algeria	French
Ben Okri	Nigeria	English
Ngugi wa Thiong'o	Kenya	English/Gikuyu
Nawal El Saadawi	Egypt	Arabic
Abdelhak Serhane	Morocco	French
Assia Djebar	Algeria	French
Elsa Djoubert	South Africa	Afrikaans
Rachid Mimouni	Algeria	French
Fawzi Mellah	Tunisia	French
Rachid Belamri	Algeria	French

TABLE 8: Geographic and linguistic distribution of the authors most frequently reviewed.

## Section Four

### The 'minor' writers

As has already been noted in Section Three of the present chapter, more than two thirds of the reviews (218 out of 294) deal with a comparatively small number of authors (19, in fact). Consequently, it is possible to point to the presence of a very large number of what might be called 'minor' (they are only 'minor' on the basis of the frequency of reviewing and in comparison with the so-called 'giants' of African literature, such as Nadine Gordimer, Naguib Mahfouz etc.) writers in the European reviews of African literature in the decade 1981-1990.

This section will aim at looking at these 'minor' writers in detail. Information will be provided as to the identity of the writers, as well as their origin in Africa, the languages in which they write and, finally, their circulation inside Europe.

All the information concerning the authors will be provided in a schematic way as set out in the two tables at the end of this section. Tables 9 and 10 make up a single table. The only difference between them is that the former includes all writers for whom at least two reviews are available, whereas the latter displays those writers who only seem to have been reviewed once in the decade in only one of the four countries analysed.

The total number of reviews of 'minor' writers is 72,



whereas the number of writers is 55. This is due to the fact that two reviews have been found for 17 writers.

Only one fifth of the authors are women: only 9 women may be found, whereas 46 authors are men.

There does not seem to be a significant difference in terms of origin, since all geographic areas are covered. In fact, 15 authors come from North Africa, 22 from Black (Subsaharan) Africa and, finally, 18 from South Africa. However, the number referring to South Africa includes both White and Black South Africans.

If one looks at each geographic area separately, the situation changes slightly. Only one woman may be found amongst 15 North African writers. The 22 authors from Subsaharan Africa, on the other hand, include 5 women and 17 men. Finally, 3 women and 15 men are included in the 18 South Africans.

Perhaps the most striking fact, comparing this data with the data available for the so-called 'major' African writers, is that Black African writers seem to dominate when it comes to 'minor' writers. The total number of Black African writers increases to 30 if one includes South Africans. This means that more than half of the 'minor' writers (30 out of 55) are Black Africans.

As far as the languages in which they write are concerned, the situation does not differ from the 'main' writers. English remains the dominant language (30 authors, more than half), followed by French (with 16 authors). Little room seems to be left for other languages: only 4 writers express themselves in Arabic, 3 in Portuguese and, finally, one in Yoruba and one in Afrikaans.

As far as European circulation is concerned, the 72 reviews of 'minor' writers are equally distributed between Great Britain, France and Italy. Spain, with

only two reviews, seems not to show a real interest in these authors.

This confirms the trends previously pointed out as far as the difference between Spain and Italy is concerned. Italian critics show a strong interest in all aspects of African literature, whereas Spaniards tend to concentrate on the discovery and introduction of the key figures, on those artists with a real international status, those who are already firmly established as the 'giants' of African literature.

### Conclusion

This section represents the final part of the chapter devoted to the statistical analysis of the reviewing of African literature in the decade 1981-1990. It aimed at analysing the so-called 'minor' writers, ie those for whom only one or two reviews were identified.

The analysis dealt with the identity of these writers, their origin in Africa, the languages in which they express themselves and, finally their circulation inside the four European countries analysed on the basis of the data available.

In some cases the trends already identified in the case of the 'major' writers apply to the 'minor' authors as well: for instance, the limited number of women reviewed.

However, the situation seems to have been reversed altogether if one looks at the geographic distribution. Whereas Black Africans represented a tiny minority amongst the 'major' African writers, they represent more than half of the 'minor' authors.

This section provides part of the statistical background against which the thematic analysis of Chapters Four, Five and Six will be carried out.

## Tables

<u>Author</u>	<u>Gender</u>	<u>Country</u>	<u>Lang.</u>	<u>Euro-circ.</u>
Mohammed Choukri	M	Morocco	Arabic	I(1)S(1)
Driss Chraïbi	M	Morocco	French	F(2)
Tahar Djaout	M	Algeria	French	F(2)
Edmond A. El-Maleh	M	Morocco	French	F(2)
Chief D. O. Fagunwa	M	Nigeria	Yoruba	I(2)
Nuruddin Farah	M	Somalia	English	GB(2)
Bessie Head	F	Botswana	English	I(2)
Farida Karodia	F	S.Africa	English	GB(2)
Ahmadou Kourouma	M	Ivory C.	French	F(1)S(1)
Abdellatif Laâbi	M	Morocco	French	F(2)
Sony Labou Tansi	M	Congo	French	I(2)
Alex La Guma	M	S.Africa	English	GB(1)I(1)
Kojo Laing	M	Ghana	English	GB(2)
Henri Lopes	M	Congo	French	F(2)
Gabriel Okara	M	Nigeria	English	I(2)
Joshua Sinclair	M	S.Africa	English	I(2)
Wilma Stockenström	F	S.Africa	Afrik.	I(1)F(1)

TABLE 9: authors reviewed twice in the period analysed  
(with information concerning their origin, gender,  
language and European reviewing circulation)

<u>Author</u>	<u>Gender</u>	<u>Country</u>	<u>Language</u>	<u>Euro-circ.</u>
Peter Abrahams	M	S.Africa	English	I
Ama Ata Aidoo	F	Ghana	English	I
Gamal Al-Ghitani	M	Egypt	Arabic	GB
Mariama Bâ	F	Senegal	French	GB
Nehdi Charef	M	Algeria	French	F
Mohammed Dib	M	Algeria	French	F
Wessel Ebersohn	M	S.Africa	English	F
Cyprian Ekwensi	M	Nigeria	English	I
M. Kacimi El-Hassani	M	Morocco	French	F
Jon Elkon	M	S.Africa	English	GB
Buchi Emecheta	F	Nigeria	English	GB
Ali Ghalem	M	Algeria	French	GB
Waguih Ghali	M	Egypt	Arabic	GB
Gamal Ghitani	M	Egypt	Arabic	F
Ernst Havemann	M	S.Africa	English	GB
Festus Iyayi	M	Nigeria	English	GB
Mohammed Khaïr-Eddine	M	Morocco	French	F
Leonard Kibera	M	Kenya	English	I
Mandla Langa	M	S.Africa	English	GB
Lina Magaia	F	Mozamb.	Portug.	GB
Dambudzo Marechera	M	Zimbabwe	English	I
Nine Moati	F	Tunisia	French	F
Ndeley Mokoso	M	Camerun	English	GB
Charles Mungoshi	M	Zimbabwe	English	I
Njabulo Ndebele	M	S.Africa	English	GB
Mike Nicol	M	S.Africa	English	I
(mf)				

(continues from previous page)

Lewis Nkosi	M	S.Africa	English	GB
Sembene Ousmane	M	Senegal	French	I
Alan Paton	M	S.Africa	English	GB
Richard Rive	M	S.Africa	English	I
Norman Rush	M	Botswana	English	F
Agnes Sam	F	S.Africa	English	GB
Sipho Sepamla	M	S.Africa	English	I
Wilbur Smith	M	S.Africa	English	I
Mustapha Tlili	M	Tunisia	French	F
José Luandino Vieira	M	Angola	Portug.	I
Timothy Wangusa	M	Uganda	English	GB
Uanhenga Xitu	M	Angola	Portug.	GB

TABLE 10: authors reviewed only once in the period analysed (with information concerning their origin, gender, language and European reviewing circulation).

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE DEVELOPMENT OF REVIEWING TRENDS IN THE DECADE 1981-1990

#### Introduction

Chapter Three, (a follow-up to Chapter Two, Section One), aims at providing part of the statistical background against which the thematic analysis of Chapters Four, Five and Six will be carried out.

Table 2 in Chapter Two shows what newspapers and periods have been analysed in this piece of research. Four papers have been regarded as representative of their countries. Others have been selected both in order to collect as many reviews as possible and also to take into account different ideological stances.

These newspapers cannot be regarded as representative of their own countries as a whole, because their circulation is often rather restricted, such as in the case of the British Communist daily The Morning Star. Their interest, however, lies in the fact that these papers are supposed to represent certain political stances.

One of the aims of this survey is to assess - this will be done later on, in Chapter Six - the presence or the importance of ideological implications and stances at the level of reviewing.

What follows is a quick reminder of the newspapers analysed:

- distinctly left-wing papers:

The Morning Star

L'Humanité

Il Manifesto

- progressive papers:

The Guardian

The Independent

Le Monde

El País

La Repubblica

- right-wing newspapers:

The Daily Telegraph

The Sunday Telegraph

Le Figaro

ABC

La Vanguardia

La Stampa

- the Catholic press:

L'Osservatore Romano

This chapter aims at looking at the reviewing of African literature throughout the decade, the second half of the decade in particular, from a different perspective, a more comprehensive one (in comparison with Chapter Two, Section One) that takes all newspapers analysed into account.

This should allow one to confirm the existence of the trends already pointed out in Chapter Two and to extend their validity to newspapers that originate in ideologically opposite areas or to newspapers that do not have a widespread circulation.

The development of reviewing will be dealt with for each



paper and country separately to start with.

a) Great Britain

The Daily/Sunday Telegraph

1986: 4 reviews: John Michael Coetzee, Wole Soyinka, Ben Okri and Abdelhak Serhane.

1987: 6 reviews: Chinua Achebe (2 reviews), Amos Tutuola (2) and Nadine Gordimer (2).

1988: 7 reviews: André Brink (2), Ben Okri, Nawal El Saadawi (2), Gamal Al Ghitani, Assia Djebar.

1989: 3 reviews: Breyten Breytenbach and Tahar Ben Jelloun(2).

1990: 4 reviews: André Brink, Nadine Gordimer, Naguib Mahfouz and J M Coetzee.

The Daily/Sunday Telegraph seems to review at least 3 or 4 books of African literature every year. The number of reviews sometimes reaches 6 (1987) or 7 (1988), but this includes reviews in the Sunday Telegraph. The same book is often reviewed twice: first in the Saturday literary review of the Daily Telegraph and subsequently, maybe two weeks later, in the Sunday Telegraph, or vice versa.

The dominance of African writers of English expression confirms the fact that in 1986 the reviewing was influenced by post-colonial links with former British colonies.

In 1988, however, a new interest in North African literature emerges. Three authors from Egypt and Algeria were reviewed.

The same trend would seem to be confirmed in 1989, although there is a decrease in the number of reviews. One more North African writer enters the reviewing space of the Telegraph. It is Tahar Ben Jelloun, incidentally, the winner of the much respected Prix Goncourt in France, an award that, like the Booker Prize, has its own powerful effect abroad.

Finally, the situation in 1990 points to the fact that African literature of English expression still dominates although the newspaper shows its awareness of the existence of other African literature, not necessarily of English expression. In particular, under the long-term effect of the Nobel Prize, Naguib Mahfouz seems to be entering, slowly and belatedly in comparison with other European countries, the Telegraph's literary pages. Black African literature of French expression, however, still seems to be almost totally ignored.

#### The Independent and The Guardian

The Independent follows exactly the same trends as The Guardian and, as one approaches the end of the decade, both newspapers regularly seem to have the same number of reviews of African literature. Moreover, the books and authors reviewed by the two dailies tend to be the same. In 1990, for instance, each paper published 4 reviews of Naguib Mahfouz, Wole Soyinka, Nadine Gordimer and John Michel Coetzee.

The situation concerning The Guardian is as follows:

1981: 2 reviews: Nadine Gordimer and Alan Paton.

1982: 5 reviews: André Brink, Elsa Joubert, Buchi Emecheta, Ben Okri and Ngugi Wa Thiong'o.

1983: 1 review: J M Coetzee

1984: 3 reviews: Nadine Gordimer, Breyten Breytenbach and André Brink.

1985: 1 review: André Brink.

1986: 6 reviews: Nuruddin Farah, Ben Okri, Wole Soyinka, Lewis Nkosi, J M Coetzee and Abdelhak Serhane.

1987: 3 reviews: Nadine Gordimer, Amos Tutuola and Chinua Achebe.

1988: 9 reviews: André Brink, Ernst Havemann, Farida Karodia, Assia Djebar, Ben Okri, Festus Iyayi, Kojo Laing and Uanhenga Xitu.

1989: 4 reviews: Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, Elsa Joubert, Breyten Breytenbach and Tahar Ben Jelloun.

1990: 4 reviews: Wole Soyinka, Naguib Mahfouz, Nadine Gordimer and J. M. Coetzee.

One can point to the domination of White South African and Black African literature of English expression in the first half of the decade. There are no signs whatsoever of African literature of French or Arabic expression.

The first signs of openness, however, may be detected in the second half of the decade.

In 1988 - as in the case of The Daily Telegraph - a certain awareness is achieved in terms of openness to 'other' African literature. Two authors from Angola and Algeria

are reviewed.

The authors reviewed in 1989 show that the above-mentioned awareness is influencing the trend. One of the books reviewed is a translation from Gikuyu. Moreover, under the effect of the 'Prix Goncourt', Tahar Ben Jelloun, a Moroccan writer of French expression has entered the Guardian's reviewing space.

Finally, the situation in 1990 points to the influence of the Nobel Prize effect. Four authors are reviewed. Two of them are Nobel Prize winners. Predictably, the other authors reviewed could be defined as the omnipresent White South Africans: Nadine Gordimer and John Michael Coetzee.

The above data shows that in the case of The Guardian, as in the case of The Daily Telegraph, the presence of White South African as well as Black African authors of English expression remains significant throughout the decade, although the first signs of an interest in other African literature begin to emerge in the second half of the decade.

The Daily/Sunday Telegraph as well as The Guardian and The Independent, are therefore characterized by a similar trend as far as the reviewing of African literature is concerned: the predominance of White South African and Black African literature of English expression, accompanied by an awareness (The Nobel Prize and the 'Prix Goncourt' effect), in the second half of the decade, of the existence of North African literature in Arabic and French, whose presence in terms of reviewing space still remains extremely limited (not to mention Black African literature of French expression which still seems to be totally ignored by the four papers).

### The Morning Star

The Communist daily newspaper devotes a great deal of space to Africa in comparison with other newspapers. Most articles, however, tend to deal with the political and economic situation, or with the development of African countries. Nevertheless, two or three reviews of African literature may be found every year.

1985: 2 reviews: Breyten Breytenbach and Ali Ghalem.

1986: 2 reviews: Njabulo Ndebele and Ngugi Wa Thiong'o.

1987: 1 review: Waguih Ghali.

1988: 4 reviews: Nawal El Saadawi (2), Ndeley Mokoso and Farida Karodia.

1989: 3 reviews: Alex La Guma, Jon Elkon and Ngugi Wa Thiong'o.

1990: 3 reviews: Mandla Langa, Agnes Sam and Lina Magaia.

A look at the number of reviews tends to lead one to say that The Morning Star follows exactly the same trend as The Guardian and The Daily Telegraph. However, a look at the name of the authors shows that very few of the books reviewed by the other newspapers are also reviewed in The Morning Star.

The Morning Star seems to choose the authors mainly on the basis of the literary 'traditions' they belong to. Social realism and protest literature together with memoirs and

political pamphlets are the paper's favourite 'genres'. A brief look at some of the titles of the books reviewed by The Morning Star might be of interest at this point:

Matigari and Decolonising the Mind by Ngugi Wa Thiong'o;

Memoirs of a Woman Doctor and She has no Place in Paradise by Nawal El Saadawi;

Tenderness of Blood by Mandla Langa;

Peasant Tales from Mozambique by Lina Magaia;

The True Confessions of an Albino Terrorist by Breyten Breytenbach.

The Morning Star represents a case, perhaps the most striking one, of a newspaper whose reviewing activity is entirely predictable from an ideological perspective. Literature, as the reviews point out, is perceived as part of the struggle against neo-colonialism and imperialism as a whole. The reviews stress the fact that the main rôle of literature is the creation of awareness and the dismantling of imperialism.

However, a comparison with other left-wing newspapers or reviews (such as Il Manifesto for instance) shows that the way adopted by The Morning Star - in terms of both selection of authors and reviewing patterns (as will be illustrated later on in this thesis, the reviewing style of The Morning Star tends to concentrate on the ideological aspects of a work, thus ignoring what seem to be regarded as strictly artistic or literary elements or values or qualities) - are not necessarily the only way in which committed or militant criticism can be performed.

The large number of South African writers reviewed by The Morning Star seem to mirror the paper's concern with apartheid. The authors, however, with the single exception of Breyten Breytenbach, are not the same South Africans that may be found in The Guardian or The Daily

Telegraph. There is no sign of what might be referred to as the 'troika' of White South African literature (ie Nadine Gordimer, John Michael Coetzee and André Brink) in The Morning Star.

The newspaper also shows a strong interest in the 'other' literature from Africa. In particular, it is concerned about Arabic literature from North Africa. Again, the authors selected and reviewed, with the sole exception of Nawal El Saadawi, are completely different from those reviewed in The Guardian and The Daily Telegraph. The Nobel Prize and the 'Prix Goncourt' do not seem to impress the newspaper's reviewers (or rather, the reviewer, since all reviews of African literature are written by Chris Searle in the period analysed).

### Conclusion

The above analysis leads one to point to the presence of two reviewing trends in Great Britain. The first trend is epitomized by both The Daily Telegraph and The Guardian, characterized by the domination of (White) South African and Black African literature of English expression, by the influence of the international awards such as the Nobel Prize and by a slight awareness of the existence of 'other' African literature in Arabic, French, Portuguese and African languages.

The second trend characterizes The Morning Star. It tends to review South African and Black African authors of a particular type. They are authors whose commitment in the anti-imperialist struggle is reflected in their choice of a certain literary 'genre' (social realism) in order to convey their own ideas.

Both trends, however, ignore Black African literature of French expression. This may be interpreted once again as

a reflection of both the British colonial past and the present post- or, as The Morning Star would probably call them, neo-colonial interests.



b) France

Le Figaro

The right-wing paper Le Figaro, in comparison with Le Monde, does not seem to devote much reviewing space to African literature. On average, one can find two reviews every year, although 1985 would appear to be an exceptional year, since there were a total of five reviews.

1985: 5 reviews: Nadine Gordimer, Rachid Boudjedra (2), Naguin Mahfouz and Tahar Ben Jelloun.

1986: 1 review: Wole Soyinka.

1987: 1 review: Tahar Ben Jelloun.

1988: 1 review: J. M. Coetzee.

1989: 2 reviews: Mehdi Cherif and Rachid Mimouni.

1990: 2 reviews: Tahar Ben Jelloun and Henri Lopes.

The identification of trends becomes more difficult when there are insufficient reviews of African literature, although the limited number of reviews represents a significant trend in itself.

However, there seems to be a certain openness towards different geographic areas: Black African and White South African literature of English expression, North African literature of both French and Arabic expression and, finally, Black African literature of French

expression.

The authors reviewed tend to be those who are internationally well-known: Nadine Gordimer, John Michael Coetzee and Naguib Mahfouz, although perhaps the dominant presence is that of North and Subsaharan writers of French expression.

### Le Monde

Le Monde is the newspaper that devotes more space to African literature than any other European newspaper analysed in this survey, at least in the long term. There are six reviews every year on average.

1981: 3 reviews: Rachid Boudjedra (2) and Tahar Ben Jelloun.

1982: 6 reviews: J. M. Coetzee, André Brink, Rachid Boudjedra, Rachid Mimouni, Abdellatif Laâbi and Driss Chraïbi.

1983: 6 reviews: Nadine Gordimer, André Brink, Nine Moati, Edmond Amran El-Maleh and Abdelhak Serhane(2).

1984: 3 reviews: Mohammed Khaïr-Eddine, Breyten Breytenbach and André Brink.

1985: 7 reviews: J M Coetzee, Wilma Stockenstrom, Naguib Mahfouz, Gamal Ghitani, Mohammed Dib, Assia Djebar and Tahar Ben Jelloun.

1986: 6 reviews: Breyten Breytenbach, André Brink, Wole Soyinka, Abdelhak Serhane, Edmond Amran El-Maleh and Driss Chraïbi.

1987: 5 reviews: Mohammed Kacimi El-Hassani, Tahar Ben

Jelloun, Tahar Djaout, Rabah Belamri and Fawzi Mellah.

1988: 6 reviews: André Brink, Wessel Ebersohn, Amos Tutuola, Naguib Mahfouz, Fawzi Mellah and Mustapha Tlili.

1989: 5 reviews: Naguib Mahfouz (3), Rachid Mimouni and Rabah Belamri.

1990: 6 reviews: Nadine Gordimer, Chinua Achebe, Henri Lopes, Ahmadou Kourouma, Rabah Belamri and Tahar Ben Jelloun.

The situation in 1985 shows the variety of directions that the interest in African literature has taken. Significantly, North African literature of French expression is only represented by three writers (out of seven).

However, if one only looks at the situation in 1987, one will probably conclude that Le Monde is locked in a kind of cultural isolation as far as African literature is concerned: all authors reviewed come from the three Maghreb countries. Post-colonial links therefore seem to be the decisive factor in the choice of the books and authors to be reviewed. However, the situation in 1987 was an exceptional one and a look at the last three years of the decade proves the point.

One could therefore cite Le Monde as an example of a European paper that devotes several reviews to African literature every year. Its interests include all geographic areas and, significantly, there often seems to be a balance between the number of reviews of African literature of French expression (ie from former colonies) and those of African literature in English, Afrikaans and Arabic, although, taken as a whole, colonial and post-colonial links - as in the case of Great Britain but to a considerably lesser extent - still

have a strong influence.

### L'Humanité

The left-wing newspaper L'Humanité has something in common with the French right-wing paper Le Figaro, analysed earlier on in this chapter. Both papers share a rather limited number of reviews of African literature.

Moreover, the few authors reviewed by both newspapers are often the same. Nadine Gordimer, Rachid Boudjedra and Tahar Ben Jelloun are among their favourite authors.

The situation is as follows:

1985: 2 reviews: Nadine Gordimer and Rachid Boudjedra.

1986: 1 review: Wole Soyinka.

1987: 2 reviews: Rachid Boudjedra and Tahar Djaout.

1988: 1 review: Norman Rush.

1989: 1 review: Abdellatif Laâbi.

A comparison between the British and the French newspapers analysed already allows one to point to a major difference between the two countries as far as the reviewing of left-wing and right-wing papers is concerned. In Great Britain the authors reviewed by the Communist paper were completely different from those reviewed by the Conservative press. The Morning Star was very careful to avoid all the international 'giants' of

African literature (the 'troika' Nadine Gordimer-Tahar Ben Jelloun-John Michael Coetzee for instance). L'Humanité, on the other hand, does not seem to share the same concern in avoiding or ignoring a certain part of African literature.

In spite of the fact that L'Humanité has a very limited number of reviews of African literature, its choice takes into account all geographic areas or at least it shows that the paper is aware of the multiplicity of African literature.

### Conclusion

Having looked at the reviewing of African literature in the three French newspapers, one could now conclude that, as a whole, the situation in France seems quite homogeneous and the trends previously identified in the analysis of Le Monde would seem to apply to the other newspapers as well.

The comparison between France and Great Britain points to the fact that France is relatively more 'open' or 'receptive' towards 'other' African literature, ie to literature not coming from former colonies.

c) Italy

L'Osservatore Romano

The analysis of Italian newspapers starts with the official paper of the Vatican City. This paper (as was the case with the British Communist daily The Morning Star), devotes many articles to Africa, although most of them deal with development problems and Christianity. Nevertheless, there seems to be a constant presence of reviews of African literature.

1985: 3 reviews: Nadine Gordimer (2) and Kenyan literature in general.

1986: 1 review: Wole Soyinka.

1987: 4 reviews: Wole Soyinka (2), Gabriel Okara, Jacques Chevrier's anthology of Black African literature.

1988: 1 review: Joshua Sinclair

1989: no reviews.

Three reviews may be found in 1985

One can perhaps conclude that the majority of the reviews deal with Black African literature (either in French or in English). The Nobel Prize effect also seems to be particularly noticeable.

Moreover, one might also point to the fact that Marxist

authors, such as Ngugi Wa Thiong'o for instance, seem to be, predictably, ignored.

It will be interesting to look at some reviews published by L'Osservatore Romano in detail. This will be done in Chapter Six, later on in this piece of research.

### La Stampa

La Stampa is generally considered a conservative newspaper because of its links with the powerful Agnelli family in Italy. However, its ideological stance does not tend to influence its literary magazine Tuttolibri. Some of its regular literary critics also write reviews for progressive and left-wing newspapers.

Moreover, Tuttolibri shows very clearly how the interest in African literature has increased in Italy in the second half of the decade.

1981: 1 review: Wilbur Smith.

1982: 1 review: Wole Soyinka.

1983: 2 reviews: Amos Tutuola (2).

1984: 1 review: Wole Soyinka (apart from the ever-present Wilbur Smith).

1985: 6 reviews: Nadine Gordimer (4), Amos Tutuola and Chief D. O. Fagunwa.

1986: 4 reviews: Nadine Gordimer (2), J. M. Coetzee and Wole Soyinka.

1987: 2 reviews: Wole Soyinka and Gabriel Okara.

1988: 8 reviews: Nadine Gordimer (2), J. M. Coetzee, André Brink, Sony Labou Tansi, Tahar Ben Jelloun, Bessie Head and Wilma Stockenstrom.

1989: 7 reviews: André Brink, Breyten Breytenbach, Mike Nicol, Sipho Sepamla, Naguib Mahfouz, Mohammed Choukri and Tahar Ben Jelloun.

1990: 6 reviews: Chinua Achebe, Amos Tutuola, Sony Labou Tansi, Luandino Vieira, Tahar Ben Jelloun and a collection of Black African short stories.

The only author reviewed in 1981, Wilbur Smith, epitomizes a kind of 'exotic' and adventure literature (Africa = lions, tam-tam, forests, etc) and tends to be reviewed regularly at least once a year. This shows that the whole concept of African literature tended to be linked to this kind of writing before signs of a new interest began to emerge.

The four reviews of books by some of the 'giants' of Black African literature of English expression, which may be found in 1984, represent a kind of pre-introduction to what is to take place in the second half of the decade. The situation will change significantly in 1985, when new trends will be set in the Italian literary scenario for the rest of the decade.

By 1987 African literature has definitely entered Italy. However, a look at the reviews shows that the authors reviewed are not equally representative of all geographic areas: North African literature in either French or Arabic and Francophone Black African literature is still virtually ignored. Only Black African and White South African literature of English expression has been so far introduced.

However, the situation changes during the last three years. A more open approach together with a recognition



of the multiplicity of African literature may be detected as from 1988.

One can therefore point to the fact that La Stampa has been able to develop a well-balanced approach to African literature over the years. An approach that has meant both devoting a relatively large amount of reviewing space to African literature and recognizing the existence of a rich and complex variety of African literature.

Perhaps one of the reasons why the paper has been able to do so is due to Italy's almost complete lack of a colonial past and, consequently, post-colonial links.

### La Repubblica

The data available for La Repubblica shows that the trends identified for La Stampa also apply to La Repubblica. An open approach and an awareness of the multiplicity of African cultures also characterize the way African literature is introduced by La Repubblica.

The authors reviewed in the second half of the decade include: Wole Soyinka, Tahar Ben Jelloun, Rachid Boudjedra, Naguib Mahfouz and Breyten Breytenbach. These names should suffice to show that the geographic distribution of the authors is representative of several African cultures.

### Il Manifesto

Il Manifesto is a left-wing newspaper with a wide readership, although it could not be regarded as representative of the country as a whole. This paper,

however, has had a very significant rôle as far as African literature is concerned. In the second half of the decade it has played an extremely active part in the introduction of African literature in Italy.

Il Manifesto has contributed to the diffusion of African literature with much more strength and perhaps motivation than any other of the European newspapers analysed. The activity of the paper is confirmed by the number of reviews found in the period 1986-1988: 25 reviews (15 of which took place in 1987 alone).

All the reviews that appeared in Il Manifesto were written by the same reviewer, an academic (like some other reviewers of African literature in Italy) who has attempted to introduce African literature to the wider public.

With very few exceptions (Naguib Mahfouz and Assia Djebar), most of the articles deal with Black African literature (both Subsaharan and South African). The exclusion of White South African writers was a deliberate decision of the reviewer.

Moreover, and this is a significant point, unlike most of the other reviews analysed in this survey, the reviews published in Il Manifesto very rarely coincided with the publication of the books reviewed. Therefore, one could claim that these reviews are potentially free of any kind of corporate pressure whatsoever.

What follows is a list containing some of the names of the authors reviewed: Chief D. O. Fagunwa, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Bessie Head, Ama Ata Aidoo, Sembene Ousmane, Cyprian Ekwensi, Alex La Guma, Dambudzo Marechera, Assia Djebar, Naguib Mahfouz, Peter Abrahams, Leonard Kibera.

The above reviews will be dealt with in detail both in the

chapter on the style and technique of 'regular' contributors (Chapter Seven) and in the chapter on the ways in which African literature can be introduced and otherness represented (Chapter Six).

### Conclusion

The analysis of Italian newspapers shows that in Italy the interest in African literature is relatively recent. In part, it may be caused by the so-called Nobel Prize or Prix Goncourt effect. These literary awards help writers achieve international circulation. (Ben Okri's books, for instance, were only translated into Italian once he was awarded the Booker Prize in Great Britain). In part, however, it may also be due to a kind of new fashionable Third-Worldism.

Moreover, the 'experiment' carried out by Il Manifesto between 1986 and 1988 shows that by 1986 some intellectuals were fully aware that the time had come in Italy for the introduction of African literature, or at least of a 'new' kind of African literature, one that represented Africa without constantly referring to lions, forests, adventures, exotic places, etc.

#### d) Spain

In the case of Spanish newspapers, there is no need whatsoever to analyse the newspapers separately because the three representative dailies seem to review the same authors with extreme regularity. Reviewing takes place along parallel lines for El País, ABC and La Vanguardia.

In 1986 the three papers devote plenty of space to Wole Soyinka (the Nobel Prize effect) and to the introduction of African literature. There is only one exception: the ABC publishes a review of a Black African writer of French expression (Ahmadou Kourouma from Ivory Coast).

1987 is devoted to the 'discovery' of the internationally acknowledged 'giants' of African literature. The details for each paper are:

El País: 5 reviews: Nadine Gordimer (3) and Wole Soyinka (2).

La Vanguardia: 7 reviews: Nadine Gordimer (4), Wole Soyinka (1) and Tahar Ben Jelloun (2).

ABC: 3 reviews: Nadine Gordimer (2) and Wole Soyinka.

1988 is devoted to the discovery and celebration of Naguib Mahfouz (Nobel Prize). Five of his books are reviewed in ABC. In the meantime, both La Vanguardia and El País also devote plenty of reviewing space to the Egyptian writer.

In the same year, J. M. Coetzee is reviewed by both ABC and El País. The latter also deals with Tahar Ben Jelloun and Nadine Gordimer (two reviews). Finally, La Vanguardia publishes one review of Mohammed Choukri, a Moroccan writer of Arabic expression.

At this point, one could almost predict that 1989 will be devoted to Naguib Mahfouz: three reviews of the Egyptian Nobel Prize writer appear in both the ABC and El País, whereas only one appears in La Vanguardia. In the meantime, J. M. Coetzee has entered the Spanish literary pages. Both the ABC and El País publish two reviews each of J. M. Coetzee. One more review appears in La Vanguardia. Finally, the Barcelona daily has one review of a North African writer of French expression: Fawzi Mellah.

### Conclusion

Spain is characterized by a sudden appearance of an interest in African literature in the second half of the decade. In spite of the fact that no data is available for the first half of the decade, one can claim that 1986 marks the entry of African literature in the Spanish reviewing space. The first reviews, in 1986, have a particularly strong 'introductory' mood.

African literature has entered the Spanish newspaper reviewing space under the effect of a new fashionable cultural Third-Worldism, mainly caused and perhaps imposed by the international literary prizes such as the Nobel Prize and the Prix Goncourt.

Moreover, as was mentioned earlier on, a comparison

between the two countries where African literature was introduced in the second half of the decade, Spain and Italy, shows that whereas Italian critics tend to explore the multiplicity of African literature, by means of reviewing a large number of 'minor' writers, the Spanish critics concentrate on the 'giants' of African literature. This implies a kind of predictability (in terms of authors) as well as, sometimes, a distinctly celebratory mood of the reviews.

### Overall conclusion

This chapter completes the statistical background of this thesis, against which the thematic discussion of Chapters Four, Five and Six, as well as the presentation of the case-study work of Chapters Seven and Eight, will be set.

This chapter has attempted an analysis of the development of reviewing trends as far as 14 European newspapers are concerned in the decade 1981-1990. The second half of the decade has been dealt with in particular.

The existence of the trends already identified in Chapter Two - which only analysed the four newspapers regarded as representative of their countries - has often been confirmed and, in some cases, their validity has been extended to additional papers.

However, this more comprehensive approach - which has analysed each country and, inside each country, each newspaper separately, has allowed more trends to emerge and to be identified. Some of the trends are typical of certain nations, others only apply to certain newspapers.

As far as Great Britain is concerned, the presence of two reviewing trends has been pointed out. The first trend is characterized by the domination of (White) South African

and Black African literature of English expression, by a considerable influence of the Nobel Prize and other international literary awards and, finally, by a slight awareness of the existence of 'other' African literature, in French, Arabic, Portuguese and African languages. Newspapers such as The Daily Telegraph, The Guardian and The Independent follow this trend.

The other trend consists of a tendency to review mainly South African and Black African authors whose commitment to the anti-imperialistic struggle is mirrored by the choice of a particular literary 'genre' (social realism, for instance) within which to express their ideas. The Morning Star follows this trend with regularity.

However, both trends seem to ignore Black African literature of French expression, a fact which may simply be a consequence of the British colonial past.

As far as France is concerned, the situation is rather homogeneous and the trends previously identified in the analysis of Le Monde also apply to Le Figaro and L'Humanité.

Le Monde may be regarded as an example of a European paper that devotes a considerable amount of reviewing space to African literature every year. Its interests include all geographic areas and there often seems to be a balance between the number of reviews of African literature of French expression (ie coming from former French colonies) and those of African literature in other languages, although, as a whole post-colonial links still have a rather strong influence.

Moreover, a comparison between Great Britain and France points to the fact that Great Britain is relatively less 'open' or 'receptive' towards African literature which does not come from previous colonies.



In Italy, on the other hand, one could point to the beginning of a genuine interest in African literature in the second half of the decade, an interest perhaps caused, or partly imposed, by the Nobel Prize effect and by cultural fashions such as Third-Worldism.

The Catholic paper L'Osservatore Romano devotes some reviewing space to Black literature (in both French and English) in particular. Marxist writers, however, appear to be virtually ignored.

La Stampa and La Repubblica seem to share an open approach and an awareness of the multiplicity of African literature. In the selection of authors to be reviewed both newspapers aim at an equal representation of several African cultures.

All Italian newspapers, especially in comparison with the Spanish ones, seem to be much more interested in 'minor' African authors and, consequently, appear to be somewhat disrespectful (at least in comparison with Spain) to international literary awards.

Il Manifesto has carried out a significant experiment between 1986 and 1988 (the publication of 25 reviews of African literature), an experiment that shows that a number of intellectuals were fully aware that the time had come in Italy for the introduction of African literature.

Finally, as far as Spain is concerned, an interest in African literature suddenly appeared in the second half of the decade. The three Spanish newspapers El País, ABC and La Vanguardia all follow the same trend. They tend to review the same authors (the 'giants' of African literature) with extreme and therefore predictable regularity.

The Nobel Prize effect, as well as literary prizes such as

the Prix Goncourt, together with a fashionable Third-Worldism, seem to be quite powerful in Spain. A comparison with Italy shows that Spanish reviewers tend to ignore the multiplicity of African literature and often concentrate on Nobel-imposed writers who are sometimes dealt with in a celebratory mood.

However, by the end of the decade, African literature has become firmly established in the literary pages of Spanish newspapers.

## PART TWO

### THEMATIC ANALYSIS

## INTRODUCTION

At this point in the development of this piece of research a few remarks are perhaps necessary on the way the thesis itself is structured.

Some of the chapters are characterized by a mainly statistical approach, others are written mainly from a theoretical perspective, others represent a thematic analysis, whereas a number of chapters, and this is the fourth type of approach, give priority to case-study work.

This Introduction to Part Two (Chapters Four, Five and Six) provides a theoretical background to the mainly thematic analysis that will take place in the next three chapters.

Chapters Four, Five and Six are a theme-oriented comparative analysis of newspaper reviewing dealing with the multiplicity of voices, the aims of reviewing and the representation of otherness (ie different familiarization techniques).

The analysis is based on:

- reviews of (White) South African literature;
- reviews of Black African (Subsaharan) literature;
- reviews of North African literature.

A thematic analysis of newspaper reviewing can address two dimensions or aspects, one that is highly subjective and another which may reach a high level of objectivity. The first aspect involves the effectiveness and persuasiveness of a review. It is not possible to define a

review as effective or persuasive without assessing a generality of reader response, which is beyond the scope of this thesis.

Besides always being subjective and relative, a reader's reaction to reviews tends to change over time and is strongly linked to expectations which in their turn result from background, education, morality and political commitment.

Consequently, this analysis stresses the comparative approach as much as possible, while limiting itself to elements such as regular patterns in reviewing and the rhetoric used to achieve pattern regularity, a rhetoric that will be the object of this analysis and that affects many of the constitutive elements of a review.

Such elements are the different voices or discourses, the presence of one or more dominant voices, the presence of literary, aesthetic, political and historical references, the style and linguistic register used, the size of the review, the interplay of viewpoints, quotations and references.

Chapter Four demonstrates that a (newspaper) review is a text characterized by a multiplicity of voices, written by a reviewer who is an omniscient coordinator of voices and discourses. He is omniscient in the sense that, like the traditional narrator in literature, he finds himself in a position to organize the different voices by means of the application of a process of selection. A 'voice' is basically a level of discourse representing a certain viewpoint.

While writing a review, a reviewer makes use of a whole series of patterns and devices that allow him to coordinate the voices, his own and the other 'selected' voices. As a result, more than one level of discourse can be found and isolated in a review.

The levels of discourse include a 'dominant' voice, sometimes two equally 'dominant' voices, and one or more secondary voices that may be carried by quotations, references, extracts. The reader may be turned into one of the voices, mainly by means of rhetorical devices (direct questions or requests, for instance) aimed at involving him, thus depriving him of a traditionally passive function, that of an addressee, a mere recipient of a message, of influence.

Chapter Five is devoted to an analysis of the (presumed) aims of reviewing. It will also point out how a review can give expression to the reviewer's background, education, morality and political commitment and how the reviewer's voice can therefore attain different degrees of objectivity. Regular patterns and rhetoric will also be dealt with in Chapter Five.

Chapter Six, finally, will consider the issue of representation of otherness and familiarization techniques.

From the point of view of content, the reviews analysed in this survey always carry a representation, a judgement of something 'other', a work of African literature in this particular case. A review may also include some reading guidelines aimed at bridging the gap between a (presumably Western European) reader and a book coming from a different 'culture'. In other words, as will be demonstrated, a review consists of the familiarization or domestication of elements of otherness.

Chapter Six will also tackle the reviewer's ideological stance. This is not always apparent but it can be discerned at the level of interpretation, representation, guidelines provided to the reader and

judgement of overall quality in particular.

Reviews are carriers of discourse. They exist inside Western discourse. The interpretations, judgements and representations they carry, therefore, have an ideological force that originates inside Western discourse.

Western discourse, as manifest in the reviews analysed below, is made up of or characterized by a multiplicity of voices that epitomize, represent and carry different ideologies that exist inside the discourse itself. Some voices and ideologies are perceived as dominant while others are regarded or regard themselves as subordinate, dissenting or subversive.

Reviews, by means of their (presumed or potential) subversiveness, therefore, have the capacity to take part in what some reviewers themselves often perceive as a struggle inside the Western discourse, a struggle aimed at the dismantling of ideological and/or cultural/aesthetic positions (often considered dominant).

A review has already been defined as a field of ideological contention (in Chapter One) and the presence of ideological stances in the representation of otherness will be illustrated in Chapter Six.

One might therefore agree with Terry Eagleton that there is more than a representation or a description in a text: *'Literature may appear to be describing the world, and sometimes actually does so, but its real function is performative: it uses language within certain conventions in order to bring about certain effects in a reader'* (1).

The above effects are achieved by means of certain rhetorical devices that, together with a number of

reviewing patterns, will be illustrated in Chapters Four and Five. Eagleton stresses the importance of rhetoric (he calls it 'discursive theory') meant as a series of linguistic devices, as means of persuading, inciting people's responses etc.

### The interpretation of a review

As was pointed out in Chapter One, in the theoretical analysis of a review as a text, a review may be regarded as a text whose meaning can be cooperatively generated by the reader. In this sense, it is possible to claim that the degree of openness of a review depends on the process of interpretation, an operation in which a reader resorts to the system of cultural codes and subcodes that makes a socially stored encyclopedia.

The reader's rôle in the construction of the identities and images suggested by the representations of Africa contained in the reviews - a rôle that reflects the reader's personal experiences, background and fantasies - is therefore fundamental and, although it cannot be 'measured' because of its subjectivity, it clearly indicates that Africa is not a fixed reality

The reader's presumed or potential rôle is that of an (active) interpreter/translator, instead of a mere passive recipient of a message or consumer of cultural products, as it was described by some critics in Chapter One. Furio Colombo and Pietro Corsi, in their analysis of the current state of newspaper reviewing, deplored the passivity of the reader by saying that 'we have to start thinking again'.



Susan Sontag shares the same opinion, though she refers to criticism in general, when she claims that *'What is important now is to recover our senses. We must learn to see more, to hear more, to feel more. [...] The aim of all commentary on art now should be to make works of art - and, by analogy, our own experience - more, rather than less real to us'* (2).

The reader's passive rôle, as was pointed out in Chapter One, in the analysis of the current debate on newspaper reviewing, is generally regarded as one of the consequences of the fact that the so-called 'committed' reviewing has allegedly disappeared (because of the presumed crisis of reviewing caused by increased corporate pressures).

This survey, however, will demonstrate that 'committed' reviewing has not disappeared and that, consequently, the possibility still exists for the reader's active participation in the interpretation of a review, (in the way it has been described in the theoretical analysis of a review as a text).

...

Each review provides an interpretation of something 'other', representing the reality behind it. Therefore, it may even be regarded as a translation. Similarly, the reader's interpretation of a review may be regarded as yet another translation. Thus, once a review (ie a representation) has been written, the possibility exists for endless translations/ interpretations.

This process of translation (between languages as well as inside one language) appears to characterize the nature of interpretation and representation (and therefore reviewing). As Gabriel Josipovici claims in

The Independent, 'we read all literature, including that written in our own language, through the spectacles of our own culture. [...] We are all of us, in a sense, translators'. (3)

The different interpretations that will be dealt with in Chapters Five and Six may thus be regarded in terms of translation. Different representations of the same book mirror different personal translations of the book. The same applies to the aims that will be pointed out in Chapter Five: each (presumed) aim reflects a personal interpretation.

Newspaper reviewing as a whole, as part and parcel of the literary joint social operation, could even be regarded as a network of translation constantly in progress.

The image of a network of translation in progress points to a situation characterized by the presence of a plurality of languages and cultures.

Each interpretation (or translation) of a text (of a book in the case of the reviewer; of a review in the case of the reader) allows the institutionalization of the interpreter's (ie the reviewer's or the reader's) subjectivity.

In other words, 'we become what we are through our encounters' (4), encounters (including books and reviews) in which the reality of otherness becomes accessible to us by means of the systems of knowledge (the shared codes/subcodes) and language through which we understand it.

The idea of the literary joint social operation meant as a network of translation in progress is reinforced by George Steiner's view: 'Literature [...] has no chance of life outside constant translation within its own language' (5). Moreover, he adds 'inside or between

*languages, human communication equals translation' (6)*

### Ambiguity

'Ambiguity' is one more element that has to be taken into account in a comparative analysis. In this research, the term 'ambiguity' refers to what the review as a text (deliberately or not) does not say.

Because of the process of selection, no review will be able to say 'everything' about a given book. Each review will take part in the cultural/literary joint social operation as a self-contained text capable of providing some information, presented in a coherent way.

Later on, the comparison itself will exemplify what is meant by 'ambiguity', by pointing to different representations or interpretations of a given book. The different representations are linked with the reviewer's biased point of view and his subtle application of the process of selection. At this level, ambiguity can be referred to as 'the hidden review' or what the text only displays by means of a comparison with other texts.

### The length of reviews

Reviews will often be described in terms of length in the course of the following chapters. It is therefore necessary to provide some explanation of the terms used.

On the basis of a comparative analysis, reviews may be divided into three categories as far as their length is concerned: long, medium and short reviews.

Long reviews are usually made up of over 400 words. They may reach 800-1000 words. They usually include more than one section. This is the case with Cristiana Pugliese's reviews in Il Manifesto, for instance. They are generally made up of an introductory review, followed by an extract that frequently includes a whole short story.

Other examples of long reviews, however, do not include any extracts and may be read as compact 'essays'. This happened with some reviews that appeared in the Spanish newspapers in 1986, which aimed at introducing African literature as a whole.

The majority of reviews, however, may be regarded as texts of medium length, ie made up of 150-400 words.

The third category includes those very short reviews that do not usually exceed 150 words. They may be found in the 'new fiction' section of most British newspaper analysed. Sometimes they can be made up of less than 100 words. These reviews will be the object of a detailed analysis in Chapter Eight.

#### Contextualization of the reviews analysed

This part of the analysis intends to compare reviews of (White) South African, Black African (Subsaharan) and North African literature.

White South African literature is represented by reviews of Nadine Gordimer's and J M Coetzee's books. Wole Soyinka, Amos Tutuola and Ngugi wa Thiong'o are the three authors that epitomize Black or Subsaharan literature. Finally, North African literature is represented by Naguib Mahfouz and Tahar Ben Jelloun.

Some of the reviews deal with the authors in a general way, at times as part of an introduction of African literature to European readers, but most of them concentrate on single works. The following books are the objects of the reviews:

Nadine Gordimer:	<u>Something Out There</u>
John Michael Coetzee:	<u>The life and times of Michel K.</u>
Wole Soyinka:	<u>The man died</u>
Amos Tutuola:	<u>Pauper, Brawler and Slanderer</u>
Ngugi wa Thiong'o:	<u>Matigari</u>
Naguib Mahfouz:	<u>Palace Walk</u>
Tahar Ben Jelloun:	<u>The Sand Child</u>

What follows is a list of the reviews analysed for each writer. Each review is given a reference number:

<u>paper</u>	<u>date</u>	<u>reviewer</u>	<u>ref.n.</u>
on Nadine Gordimer:			
<u>L'Osservatore Romano</u>	30.09.85	Carmine di Biase	R 236
<u>El País/La Repubbl.</u>	23.10.86	Irene Bignardi	R 207
<u>The Guardian</u>	22.03.84	Emma Tennant	R 243
<u>Le Figaro</u>	21.06.85	A Muratori-Philip	R 220
<u>L'Humanité</u>	25.06.85	Claude Prévost	R 232
<u>La Stampa</u>	27.09.86	Masolino D'Amico	R 210
<u>ABC</u>	15.08.87	M García-Posada	R 157
<u>La Vanguardia</u>	08.10.87	Susana Camps	R 163
on John Michael Coetzee:			
<u>El País</u>	23.10.86	Maria Lozano	R 207

<u>ABC</u>	13.02.88	P Antonio Urbina	R 110
<u>El País</u>	31.01.88	Encarna Castejón	R 118
<u>La Stampa</u>	27.12.86	Itala Vivan	R 212
<u>Le Monde</u>	07.06.85	Bernard Génès	R 226
<u>The Guardian</u>	29.09.83	Norman Shrapnel	R 250

on Wole Soyinka:

<u>L'Osservatore Romano</u>	25.03.87	N Pietravalle	R 169
<u>L'Osservatore Romano</u>	16.09.87	Italo A. Chiusano	R 172
<u>La Stampa</u>	25.07.87	Claudio Gorlier	R 174
<u>Il Manifesto</u>	16.05.87	C Pugliese	R 176
<u>El País</u>	26.03.87	C.A. Caranci	R 168
<u>ABC</u>	10.01.87	M García-Posada	R 154
<u>La Vanguardia</u>	05.03.87	Robert Saladrigas	R 159

on Amos Tutuola:

<u>Il Manifesto</u>	03.08.86	C Pugliese	R 281
<u>La Stampa</u>	01.06.85	Claudio Gorlier	R 240
<u>La Stampa</u>	08.09.90	Claudio Gorlier	R 29
<u>The Daily Telegraph</u>	10.04.87	K. McL.	R 136
<u>The Sunday Telegraph</u>	14.06.87	D.A.N. Jones	R 137
<u>The Guardian</u>	10.04.87	Norman Shrapnel	R 141

on Ngugi wa Thiong'o:

<u>Il Manifesto</u>	26.10.86	C Pugliese	R 280
<u>The Guardian</u>	02.06.89	Michelle Quinn	R 39
<u>The Independent</u>	20.05.89	A Maja-Pearce	R 43
<u>The Morning Star</u>	24.08.89	Chris Searle	R 49

on Naguib Mahfouz:

<u>Il Manifesto</u>	14.10.88	C Pugliese	R 283
<u>La Repubblica</u>	10.02.90	Fabio Ciriachi	R 31
<u>El País</u>	06.11.88	Yolanda Gonzáles	R 122
<u>ABC</u>	22.10.88	Juan P Quiñonero	R 111
<u>ABC</u>	21.10.89	M García-Posada	R 62
<u>The Guardian</u>	29.03.90	A Thomas Ellis	R 6
<u>The Independent</u>	24.03.90	Philip Stewart	R 9
<u>Le Monde</u>	20.09.85	J-P. Péroncel-H.	R 231
<u>Le Figaro</u>	18.10.85	V Khoury-Ghata	R 224

on Tahar Ben Jelloun:

<u>The Daily Telegraph</u>	01.04.89	Julia Neuberger	R 36
<u>La Repubblica</u>	21.01.86	S Giovanardi/ Natalia Aspesi	R 132
<u>Le Figaro</u>	13.09.85	Claire Gallois	R 223
<u>Le Monde</u>	06.09.85	Josyane Savigneau	R 230
<u>La Vanguardia</u>	15.10.87	Robert Saladrigas	R 164

In total, 45 reviews have been analysed in this part of the survey; 14 for White South African literature, 17 for Black Subsaharan literature and 14 for North African literature.

These figures can be misleading if they are not contextualised. They may lead one to think that there is a kind of equal representation or presence of the three geographic areas of African literature, whereas, as has been illustrated by the statistical analysis in Chapters Two and Three, Black Subsaharan literature tends to be underrepresented in the European papers over the period 1981-1990.

Although one of the Black African writers is a Nobel Prize winner (Wole Soyinka), the statistical analysis has shown that such an internationally respected and renowned literary award does not seem to have strengthened the Black African writer's presence, in terms of reviewing space, to the same extent as in the case of both the North African writer Naguib Mahfouz and the White South African (Nadine Gordimer, who was already the most regularly reviewed African writer long before she was awarded the Nobel Prize).

If one refers back to Table 5 (in Section Three, Chapter Two), one will see that Nadine Gordimer reaches a total of 34 reviews over the ten-year period. In the selected

newspapers, she is followed by Naguib Mahfouz, with 28 reviews. J M Coetzee follows in third position with 19 reviews, followed by Tahar Ben Jelloun, with 17 reviews. There is one more White South African writer, André Brink, before the first Black African can be found: Wole Soyinka, with 12 reviews. Amos Tutuola and Chinua Achebe can be found in eighth and ninth position with 9 and 8 reviews respectively. Ngugi wa Thiong'o reaches a total of 6 reviews and finds himself in <sup>elev</sup>enth position.



### Notes

- (1) Terry Eagleton  
Literary Theory: an Introduction  
Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1983, p.118
- (2) Susan Sontag  
'Against Interpretation'  
20th Century Literary Criticism  
ed. by David Lodge  
Longman, London & New York, 1972, p. 660
- (3) Gabriel Josipovici  
'Breaking the language barrier'  
The Independent  
London, 20.6.90, p.28
- (4) Victor Burgin  
quoted in Shocks to the System  
exhibition catalogue  
South Bank Publications, London, 1991, p.39  
Transcript of debate: 'The state of British art'  
ICA, London, 1978 (Transcript Studio Int'l, 2.78)
- (5) George Steiner  
After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation  
O.U.P., Oxford, 1975, p.30
- (6) Ibid., p. 47

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE MULTIPLICITY OF VOICES IN NEWSPAPER REVIEWING

#### Introduction

This chapter represents a thematic discussion and aims at analysing one important aspect of newspaper reviewing (not necessarily just of African literature): the multiplicity of voices and the presence of a dominant voice inside a review.

The voices that may carry the messages of a review include the reviewer, the author and the characters of the book. However, other voices can be found in a review. Voices are combined and organized in a variety of ways and, in theory, there could be endless combinations, though most often a review contains no more than two or three voices.

The following extracts provide four different examples of voices:

the first one is a typical example of the reviewer's voice and is taken from R 250:

*"A novel about the dispossessed. [...] We know the end of such journeys in literature as in life: nothing much good can come to him. [...] another despair saga, another dead-end safari of the modern picaresque. [...] It makes a strong and memorable novel"*

(R 250)

(Norman Shrapnel in The Guardian on J. M Coetzee's The Life and Times of Michael K.)

The reviewer is expressing his own opinions. His voice is reinforced by the use of the personal pronoun 'we', aimed at creating a bond between critic and reader, a bond based on the assumption of a shared literary background. Readers are supposed to be familiar with the picaresque tradition and with the predictability of its plots. The reviewer very often tends to 'represent' or introduce the book by means of definitions carried by structurally simple descriptive sentences of the kind 'this is a book about...', or 'this is a good/bad book'.

The second is a characteristic example of the 'author's voice' and is taken from R 132:

*" Il libro lo colloco più o meno negli anni Quaranta, quando il Marocco era ancora una colonia francese. [...] [Da bambino, malato, circondato dalle donne] Io osservavo la loro esistenza così piccola, servile.[...] Ne ho provato pietà e rabbia, la certezza di una ingiustizia supinamente accettata." (R 132)*

*"The book is set more or less in the 1940s, when Morocco was still a French colony. [...] [As a child, sick and surrounded by women] I observed their existence, such a petty and servile existence. [...] I felt sympathy and rage, the awareness of an injustice that was being accepted passively".*

(S. Giovanardi/N. Aspesi in La Repubblica on Tahar Ben Jelloun's The Sand Child)

The author is describing his own book during an interview. First of all, he is defining the book by means of setting it in space and time. Then, he proceeds on to talk about his childhood, to point out the events that represent the roots of the book. The pattern is that of the 'autobiography' which is characterized by the use of

the first person pronoun and the presence of verbs in the past tense.

The third typical example, taken from R 49, shows the character's voice:

*'My friends! Can you tell me where a person could find truth and justice in this country? [...] Cast your fears away, for we are not alone. Our patriots are still living'*  
(R 49)

(Chris Searle in The Morning Star on Ngugi wa Thiong'o's Matigari).

Matigari's voice is being quoted to illustrate the novel's revolutionary message. The main advantage of such a way of dealing with quotations, especially when it comes to delicate points such as the presentation of a book's aims or themes or an author's intentions, is that a strong sense of immediacy and credibility may be achieved.

Finally, two examples of others' voices. Sometimes they can be regarded as 'extratextual' voices, where the text in question is not the review but the book that is the object of the review. The two examples come from R 236 and 240 respectively:

*'"La società che costruiremo" - dichiara Padre Smangaliso Mkatshwa, segretario della Conferenza episcopale sudafricana - "dovrà essere fatta di bianchi e di neri"'* (R 236)

*'"The society that we are going to build" - declares Father Smangaliso Mkatshwa, the secretary of the South African episcopal conference - "will have to be made up of Whites as well as Blacks"'*

(Carmine di Biase in L'Osservatore Romano on Nadine Gordimer's Something Out There).

In this case the voice is 'extratextual' in the sense that it is not directly linked to the book. The voice belongs to someone who does not deliberately take part in the literary social operation. The introduction of this extratextual voice - in this case it is a local high-rank 'officer' of the Catholic church - in a review of Nadine Gordimer's books allows the reader to perceive a wider-ranging approach to the book. At the same time, it adds extra credibility since the information comes from a public persona who undoubtedly has an in-depth knowledge of the South African reality. The dominating tense here is the future ('we will build', 'there will have to be') since the analysis is projected in the future, a kind of future that is not well determined though.

The other example is taken from R 240:

*"Diabolico e ammaliante; prodigioso e ordinario", così Dylan Thomas definì il Bevitore' (R. 240)*

*"Devilish and bewitching; wonderful and ordinary" this is how Dylan Thomas defined The Palm Wine Drinker'.*

*(Claudio Gorlier in La Stampa on Amos Tutuola's Pauper, Brawler and Slanderer).*

This time the voice cannot be defined as extratextual because it belongs to another reviewer who is commenting - or rather commented - on the book or the author which are the subject of the present review. The quotation comes from another influential source. It is just a brief and concise definition, a series of four adjectives, but it is a 'credible and respectable' representation of a book.

These two examples show that 'others' voices' (both extratextual voices and other reviewers' or commentators' voices) tend to be used in order to add credibility or to approach a book in a wider-ranging way.

Combinations of voices vary in terms of the balance between dominant and secondary voices. The combination in each review depends on the reviewer and on the way he, once again, applies the principle of selection. (He has already applied it once in the choice of the book to be reviewed).

The reviewer, not surprisingly, tends to dominate in nearly two thirds of the reviews (32/45). In 9 reviews, a balance can be found between the reviewer and the author. Finally, the author becomes the dominant voice only in 4 reviews.

#### a) The author as a dominant voice

There are four ways in which, or rather four main devices by means of which an author is assigned the dominant voice in the reviews analysed: the interview, the use of quotations, extracts from a book (or even whole short stories), and the reported point of view.

In the case of the interview, the overall effect of the device obviously depends on the way the interview is carried out, on the kind of questions that are asked by the reviewer-interviewer. R 207 shows very clearly that an interview can be an extremely powerful device, capable of giving priority to the voice of the author.

Nadine Gordimer is asked some clear and direct questions like:

- *¿Qué piensa de Botha?, and*
- *¿Son realmente útiles las sanciones contra el régimen*

*suraficano?* (R 207)

- *What is your opinion of Botha?*

- *Are sanctions against the South African regime really useful?*

(Irene Bignardi in La Repubblica on Nadine Gordimer).

In this case, there is no mediation between the reader and the author; therefore, the effect of directness, immediacy and clarity can be felt with no ambiguity.

A subtle and careful use of quotations may have the same effect. This can be seen in R 230 in which Tahar Ben Jelloun is quoted several times, although not directly interviewed by the reviewer. (Possibly, the quotations are extracts from previous interviews or public statements):

- *"... à Tanger vers 1955. J'ai eu deux révélations, le désir et le cinéma"*

- *"... 1965 à Rabat... un amour raté et les émeutes de mars 1965"*

(R 230)

- *"... in Tangier around 1955. I had two revelations: desire and cinema"*

- *"...1965 in Rabat... the end of a love story and the riots of 1965".*

(Josyane Savigneau in Le Monde on Tahar Ben Jelloun's The Sand Child).

Again, the sense of directness and the lack of ambiguity can be clearly perceived. Communication takes place between the author and the reader, whilst the reviewer apparently disappears or at least remains silent. The sense of directness is due to the use of the first person pronoun followed by the verb in the past. It is an autobiographical statement with all its implications in terms of credibility.

In R 280 Ngugi wa Thiong'o becomes the dominant voice by means of the combination of three devices: reported point of view, quotations and a whole short story:

*"In questi anni Ngugi si avvicina al marxismo e al suo idealismo iniziale si sostituisce un vivo impegno politico. Il dovere degli intellettuali è di schierarsi con il popolo oppresso: 'Io ho semplicemente deciso da che parte stare nella lotta di classe: ho deciso di scrivere, parlare e lavorare a favore dei contadini e dei lavoratori' " (R 280)*

*"During these years, Ngugi approaches Marxism and his initial idealism is replaced by a strong political commitment. Intellectuals have a duty to side with the oppressed: 'I have simply decided whose side I am on in the class struggle: I have decided to write, speak and work in favour of peasants and workers'"*

(Cristiana Pugliese in Il Manifesto on Ngugi wa Thiong'o).

This extract shows how the reviewer at one point manages to remain silent and let Ngugi speak directly to the reader. In the first sentence the reviewer is expressing her own voice. The subject of the sentence is Ngugi, followed by a verb in the third person singular. The second sentence represents a transition, a stage in which the reviewer is making way for the author. The subject of the sentence is in the third person plural ('intellectuals') and it sounds like a statement by Ngugi simply quoted by the reviewer. In the third sentence the dominant voice is the author and the reviewer has disappeared. The author's domination is emphasised by the use of the first person pronoun.

The brief introduction of the review, which is also characterized by a subtle use of the dramatic present, is



followed by a whole short story (nearly two pages of the newspaper): 'Addio all'Africa' ('Farewell to Africa'), taken from 'Secret lives' and translated into Italian by the reviewer. The meeting of the author and the reader could hardly have a more powerful impact.

The same devices can be found in R 283, though there is no short story or extract. On the other hand, the introduction written by the reviewer is followed by extracts from an interview with the author, Naguib Mahfouz, previously published by the French 'Magazine littéraire', again, translated into Italian by the reviewer.

#### b) A balance between two voices

In the case where a balance can be detected between two dominant voices, the reviewer's and the author's, once again, one can find a number of devices that aim at equally distributing the reviewing space between the two voices. The devices will be exemplified in the following extracts.

In R 110, the reviewer often allows the author to speak by means of quoting the novel's characters:

*"¿Es usted idiota? es ésta la pregunta que la mujer policía dirige al protagonista de la novela..." (R 110)*

*"'Are you an idiot?' this is the question the police-woman asks the protagonist of the novel..."*  
(R Antonio Urbina in ABC on J. M. Coetzee's The Life and Times of Michael K.).

The above sentence contains the two voices. The first part is the author's voice, under the guise of a quotation

carried by one of his book's characters, whereas the second part is the reviewer's voice that is somehow introducing the author's voice.

One could claim that there are three voices in this sentence, the reviewer's, the author's and the character's/police woman's voice. The character, though she is a creation of the author, does not necessarily speak with his voice. However, what is important in this particular case is that the reviewer is only using half of the reviewing space and is leaving the rest to the author or to the book characters.

R 174 contains extracts from an interview with Wole Soyinka. Again, the author communicates directly with the reader:

*"'La letteratura africana è una grande realtà ad onta delle sue antinomie e delle sue tensioni. Bisogna saper leggere, e liberarsi di un'ottica troppo risolutamente europea, vedere il fenomeno dal suo interno. Non è facile ma è necessario'" (R 174)*

*"'African literature is one big reality in spite of its antinomies and tensions. One has to be able to read it, to get rid of a too resolutely European outlook, to look at the phenomenon from inside. It is not easy but it is necessary'"*.

(Claudio Gorlier in La Stampa on Wole Soyinka).

The reviewer himself could have delivered the same message, this presumedly essential guideline, but he is obviously aware that the impact on the reader, especially in terms of credibility, would not have been the same.

In R 281 there is a balance between the reviewer's and the author's presence. The reviewer is a specialist, however, in this review she has deliberately turned into

a reliable reporter who is able to introduce the author in a reader-friendly style. Subsequently, the reader meets the author (Amos Tutuola) in the short story that follows the review. This is exemplified in the following extract.

*"Tutte le sue storie si ispirano ai racconti popolari yoruba. [...] Lo stile della narrazione è essenzialmente orale e l'uso della prima persona dona grande spontaneità. [...] Continue ripetizioni che hanno la funzione di scandire la successione degli eventi e tenere vivo l'interesse del pubblico." (R 281)*

*"All his stories are inspired by Yoruba traditional tales. [...] The narrative style is essentially oral and the use of the first-person pronoun adds a great deal of spontaneity. [...] The continuous repetitions aim at emphasizing the succession of events and at keeping the interest of the audience alive."*

(Cristiana Pugliese in Il Manifesto on Amos Tutuola).

The reviewer's style is reader-friendly because there are no strictly academic, didactic or cryptic terms in the language she uses in order to explain concepts. On the contrary, from an academic point of view, her language might even sound rather bland or 'simple'; she does not seem to add anything to what is already known about Amos Tutuola or the Yoruba literary tradition. However, the reviewer is highly aware that the average reader of her review will have never heard either of Yoruba literature or most probably of Amos Tutuola.

The reviewer's reader-friendly attitude can be found in the short story that follows the review. She does not hesitate to interfere at one point to explain what a certain expression means.

*"...per molti baleni (nella lingua yoruba 'baleno' significa minuto [Nota del Traduttore])" (R 281)*

"... for many flashes (in the Yoruba language 'flash' means minute [Translator's note])"

The clear and concise translator's note does not interrupt the flow of the narration and may prove to be very helpful to the reader who may have the impression of being guided into unknown territory by someone 'who can be trusted', someone who is able to introduce something 'new' or 'other', such as African literature, in a clear and accessible way..

Finally, in R 49 the balance is achieved by introducing quotations from the novel (Matigari). An extract from this review has already been introduced and analysed at the beginning of this chapter.

#### c) The reviewer as a dominant voice

The first example of this type of voice combination comes from R 6:

*'It is Mahfouz's wonderful ability to delineate human beings from their outer appearance to their innermost preoccupations which gives "Palace Walk" its universal appeal. I will read it again and again.'* (R 6)

(A Thomas Ellis in The Guardian on Naguib Mahfouz's Palace Walk).

The reviewer is expressing her own personal opinion which is subsequently reinforced by the use of the first-person pronoun. The key words are 'wonderful', 'universal' and 'again and again'. They are 'absolute' words in terms of meaning.

These words, together with a number of other words that can be used in the same way, may be found in a great deal of reviews as will be pointed out later on in this survey. They belong to a group of words and phrases that might be defined 'literary tags or clichés' because they can be easily applied to any book and any review.

The whole paragraph from R 6, if one replaces the words 'Mahfouz' and 'Palace Walk' with the name of another author and the title of another book, could be used again in another review. This will be pointed out later on, in Chapter Eight that deals with the potential interchangeability of literary 'tags'.

The second example is taken from R 243:

*'Like the thrifty housekeepers of the past, Nadine Gordimer is a writer who, with their jars of pieces of string too short for any immediate use, will nevertheless one day join them or secure with them a tiny bouquet, or even simply display them as minimalist art.'* (R 243)  
(Emma Tennant in The Guardian on Nadine Gordimer's Something Out There).

The reviewer's domination can be noticed in the imagery. She indulges in using the language in a creative way, aiming at a kind of fictionalized account. She can 'afford' to do it because, like the critic who wrote the previous review, she is also a highly credible and respected public persona and a well-established figure on the British literary scene.

The third example is taken from R 36:

*"Indeed, the plot is enough to depress and make women readers very angry. [...] Beneath the humour, there is a tragic story. [...] it is clear that he is a fine writer. [...] it is an amusing, haunting and ultimately*

*depressing story, without an end."* (R 36)

(Julia Neuberger in The Daily Telegraph on Tahar Ben Jelloun's The Sand Child).

The reviewer is defining and interpreting the book by means of sentences that seem to have a repetitive structure. They are all descriptive statements of the kind 'the book is.../the story is.../he is.../it is...'. This kind of pattern is probably the most typical in those reviews in which the reviewer is the dominating voice.

This extract shows that in order to be dominant the reviewer does not necessarily have to resort to the use of the first person pronoun or to the use of the language in a creative, fictionalized way as exemplified in R 6 and R 243. In R 36 the reviewer is a more discreet presence.

The next extract, from R 43, shows a reviewer who is using the language in a descriptive way.

*"Kenya is one of the most repressive countries in Africa, a fact which is borne out by the number of lawyers and journalists and university lecturers who are at present imprisoned. [...] Matigari, beautifully translated by Wanguy wa Goro, is written with deliberate simplicity, which is in keeping with the author's decision to write primarily for ordinary Kenyans..."* (R 43)

(A. Maja-Pearce in The Independent on Ngugi wa Thiong'o's Matigari).

Once again, the sentence pattern is characterized by the use of the verb 'to be' in the third person singular (descriptive sentences).

The last example is taken from R 39:

*"But something essential is lost to the English reader [...] The novel's rhythm and repetition are part of an oral tradition which doesn't translate well, let alone on*

*paper. The parody is often heavy-handed and at the expense of the reader, who is given no room to find the meaning. [...] Furthermore, Ngugi's characters are too obviously a mouthpiece for the author's rage against an authoritarian regime. But, then again, Matigari's function is clearly polemic". (R 39)*

(Michelle Quinn in The Guardian on Ngugi wa Thiong'o's Matigari).

Again, the reviewer is dominant though discreet in the sense that he is not providing a fictionalized and blatantly subjective account. Instead, he is limiting himself to describing/interpreting the book in question mainly by means of descriptive statements of the most common kind found in these reviews: 'the book/author/character(s) is/are ...'.

In both cases, (whether the reviewer says 'this is a book about...' or 'I think this book is wonderful ...') however, as will be pointed out in Chapter Five (in the analysis of the aims of reviewing), the review is characterized by a deliberate 'appropriation' of reviewing space by the reviewer.

### Conclusion

This chapter has shown that a newspaper review is a text most often characterized by a multiplicity of voices, written by a reviewer who can be considered a coordinator (as well as a selector) of voices and discourses.

A number of voice combinations have been analysed and the examples and extracts allow one to say that the voices that can carry the messages of a review include the reviewer, the author and the characters of the book. However, examples have also been given of other, perhaps

'extratextual', voices.

This chapter has also illustrated the most typical devices by means of which an author is sometimes assigned the dominant voice in a review, as well as the most characteristic devices that aim at equally distributing the reviewing space between the author and the reviewer in the more common case of a balance between two dominant voices.

Moreover, the reviews analysed in this chapter have also illustrated the most common case in which the dominant voice belongs to the reviewer.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE AIMS AND 'MOODS' OF REVIEWING

#### Introduction

This chapter will consist of a comparative analysis aimed at identifying the potential aims (and, consequently, the related tones or 'moods') that characterize reviews.

The obvious or apparent objective of every review is to inform. However, not all reviews necessarily aim at informing in the same way. In spite of the fact that each text is produced by a different person in a different context, one can point to a number of recurring 'moods' or tones in reviewing.

A comparative analysis of reviews points out that there are several ways of informing. Here, somehow the borders between subjectivity and objectivity overlap or become blurred due to the fact that the way a review is perceived reflects both the critic's intentions, background, education, morality, political commitment and the reader's background, expectations and interpretation skills.

A reviewer, for instance, may aim at moving readers. Some readers, however, will be shocked instead, others will be moved, others will be entertained and so on. Similarly, a review written with the aim of shocking, may be

eventually perceived as moving or entertaining.

As was mentioned in the introduction to Chapters Four, Five and Six, an objective comparative analysis (in this particular case an analysis of the 'tones' or 'moods' of a review) should limit itself to textual elements such as regular patterns in reviewing, the lexicon and the rhetoric used to achieve pattern regularity.

What follows is a categorization and an exemplification of the dominant 'moods' or 'tones' of the reviews resulting from the comparative analysis. A review may obviously contain more than one tone or mood, although one mood can be often perceived as dominant.

a) Reviewing as a display of knowledge.

This kind of reviewing is characterized by a basic paradox regarding the nature of reviewing itself. If reviewing as a whole aims at informing, this particular kind of reviewing, as will be illustrated by the extracts, paradoxically, is capable of hindering the flow of information.

The hindrance takes place by means of a concentration of often specialized information that some readers might perceive as (comparatively) overwhelming.

The first two typical examples come from R 240:

*"Conosceva il poeta Christopher Okigbo, morto in combattimento, ufficiale dell'esercito biafrano?" Okigbo era un ibo e Tutuola non ama gli ibo, che ritiene troppo legati ai colonizzatori inglesi, anche se lo fa capire con discrezione: "Okigbo doveva possedere un juju troppo debole e i suoi nemici un juju molto forte. Per questo è morto"' (R 240)*

*"Did you know the poet Christopher Okigbo, who died as an officer fighting for the Biafran army?" Okigbo was an Ibo and Tutuola does not like Ibos, whom he considers too close to the British colonisers, though he is quite discreet when he hints at that. "Okigbo must have had a juju that was too weak, whereas his enemies had a very powerful juju. That's why he died". (R 240)*  
*(Claudio Gorlier in La Stampa on Amos Tutuola)*

The display of knowledge can be seen in the concentration

of new information. There are at least three items that are being introduced in these sentences: the poet Okigbo, the Ibos and their rôle in the Biafran war and, finally, the 'juju'. Italian readers, who, presumably have decided to read this review in order to get to know an as yet unheard of African writer, Amos Tutuola, are somehow 'lectured' on yet another African writer, Christopher Okigbo.

The next extract comes from the same review:

*"Diabolico e ammaliante; prodigioso e ordinario", così Dylan Thomas definì il Bevitore' (R 240)*

*"Devilish and bewitching; wonderful and ordinary", this is how Dylan Thomas defined the Palm-Wine Drinker' (R 240)*

This quotation gives the review a more 'intellectual' flavour or dimension. However, it also acts as a braking or distancing device, in the sense that it prevents the reader from having direct access to Amos Tutuola's writing. Instead of a direct access or experience, the reader is offered one more definition of Amos Tutuola's writing. Any information about Amos Tutuola is 'percolated' or 'digested' twice before it reaches the reader. Again, this concentration of information, and second-hand to boot, may be regarded as preventing readers from having direct access to the author.

The last example comes from R 210:

*"Se esistono ancora lettori italiani lontani dall'opera vasta e articolata, e ancora per buona parte da tradurre, di Nadine Gordimer, questo racconto, che dà il titolo al suo libro più recente, costituisce un'introduzione eccellente, in quanto presenta in forma sintetica e con eccellenza stilistica alcuni dei temi caratteristici dell'autrice." (R 210)*

*"If there still exist any Italian readers who have not come across the wide, rich and mostly untranslated, work by Nadine Gordimer, this short story, which also gives the title to the collection, is an excellent introduction, since it contains some of the writer's characteristic themes, presented in a synthetic form and with stylistic excellence" (R 210)*

*(Masolino D'Amico in La Stampa on Nadine Gordimer's Something Out There).*

This extract, in which the (rather ostentatious) display of knowledge is apparent in the reviewer's somewhat patronising attitude towards his readers, contains a paradox: that of expecting Italian readers to be able to read in English. The reviewer states that Nadine Gordimer's books are still 'mostly untranslated' into Italian; nevertheless he assumes that Italian readers have read them. The readers who are able to read literature in English can only be a minority in a country where English is not the official language.

However, the statement can also be interpreted as a rhetorical statement, in which case it should be understated in the English translation. Italian and Spanish are characterized by a widespread use of hyperbole and overstatement.

What is disturbing, if not off-putting, in the statement, is that it is actually telling the reader that if he has not read Nadine Gordimer's books yet, possibly in English, it is high time he did. The reader is somehow supposed to feel that he is 'behind', that he needs to catch up with cultural events or trends and, finally, that there is a gap in his background or education. Therefore, he has to read these short stories as soon as possible. Subsequently, he will be able to claim membership of a kind of exclusive club, that of Nadine

Gordimer's readers.

This kind of reviewing seems to take for granted a certain level of education, or at least a certain disposition or attitude, in the reader. Consequently, one might perhaps argue, it is capable of preventing a number of readers from having direct access to African literature.

Moreover, and this is the paradox that was referred to at the very beginning of this section, an approach based on a rather ostentatious display of esoteric knowledge even seems to ignore one of the fundamental aims of newspaper reviewing, which is to make a traditionally academic subject available to a wider audience. In other words, this is not a reader-friendly approach.

This type of reviewing might be compared to another, comparatively more reader-friendly approach (to be dealt with later on in this chapter) in which a review is perceived as a 'direct access' to the author/book. On the other hand, it might be regarded as closely related to other ways of reviewing that often appear to hinder or prevent direct access to books and authors, such as reviewing as lecturing and reviewing as the expression of a personal opinion.

The extracts that have been analysed in this section are aimed at illustrating a kind of reviewing characterized by a display of knowledge.

This 'mood' has the capacity to hinder the flow of reader-friendly information (paradoxically, through a concentration of information), thus undermining the objective of informing. The hindrance, as the examples have shown, takes place by means of a concentration of specialized information that readers may perceive as overwhelming. After all, readers might be approaching African literature for the first time, especially in a country like Italy or Spain where the interest in African

literature is relatively new.

b) Reviewing as lecturing.

This kind of reviewing is written in a didactic style that tends to sound comparatively 'too serious', heavy, cryptic or even dogmatic for two reasons. The first one is its particular linguistic register which is characterized by an excess of hard-and-fast categorization, definitions, explanations and the like, as the following examples will demonstrate. The second is the kind of lexicon used: technical literary terms and esoteric references are the most common elements.

The first typical example comes from R 210:

*"La seconda qualità della Gordimer possiamo definirla pittorica. Nel senso di una grande forza evocatrice di ambienti..." [...] "Terza qualità della Gordimer, anche questa essenziale per un romanziere, il senso di competenza trasmesso a proposito delle cose di cui si parla" (R 210)*

*"The second of Nadine Gordimer's qualities may be defined as picturesque, in terms of a great power to invoke atmospheres" [...] "Her third quality, again one that is essential for a novelist, the sense of competence she is able to transmit about the things she is writing about" (R 210)*

*(Masolino D'Amico in La Stampa on Nadine Gordimer's Something Out There).*

The reviewer's tendency towards categorization can be perceived in the way he spells out the author's qualities ('the second [...] quality', 'the third quality' etc), whereas his inclination towards definitions may be seen

in the way he explains what the qualities represent ('the second quality [...] may be defined as picturesque in terms of...').

Reading this extract, one has a feeling that the reviewer is selling the reader short, that he is underestimating the reader's intelligence or ability to decode the review. The reviewer thinks the reader is in need of basic guidance. Presumably, the reader would be unable to understand that 'the sense of competence is important for a novelist'. It is because of these explanations that the review acquires a didactic flavour.

The following two extracts come from R 157:

*[It refers to a short story by Nadine Gordimer in which Kafka's father is replying to his son's well-known letter] "'Familia, te odio', escribió Rimbaud; Kafka desarrolló este odio por extenso; es lastima que Luís Cernuda se limitara solo al poema La familia. [...] Pero también rinde homenaje al autor de La metamorfosis cuando lo pinta a una luz no favorable: la grandeza de la literatura moderna - es decir de sus figuras mayores - reside, entre otras cosas, en su capacidad para engendrar la contracritica." (R 157)*

*"'Family, I hate you' wrote Rimbaud; Kafka developed this hate extensively; it is a 'pity' that Luís Cernuda only limited himself to the poem La familia" [...] "But [Nadine Gordimer] also pays a tribute to the author of The Metamorphosis when she portrays him in an unfavourable light: the greatness of modern literature - of its main figures - lies, amongst other things, in its capacity to trigger up countercriticism" (R 157)*

*(M. García-Posada in ABC on Nadine Gordimer's Something Out There).*

The first three lines include a literary reference to four different authors: Kafka, Rimbaud, Cernuda and



Nadine Gordimer. The extract may be seen as a piece of comparative literature. However, once again, from a comparative perspective, it might sound too 'intellectual' or even 'contrived'. The references to Nadine Gordimer and Franz Kafka are entirely justified by the fact that the short story that is being reviewed deals with Kafka and his father. The reference to Rimbaud and Cernuda, on the other hand, might hinder the flow of information and, again, divert the reader's attention towards other writers instead of Nadine Gordimer who is the subject of the review.

The reviewer's tendency towards defining and explaining may be seen in the last part of the extract, when he explains where 'the greatness of modern literature' lies. This is a didactic attitude, very similar to the one that was found in the previous example.

This aspect of reviewing has something in common with reviewing as a display of knowledge (that has already been analysed in this chapter). Some elements common to the two types of reviewing may be detected in the first part of the extract from R 157. The reference to the four writers, for example, could be decoded or interpreted, amongst other ways, as follows:

- a piece of comparative literature;
- a display of knowledge by the reviewer.

The following extracts are taken from R 154:

*"El título [El hombre ha muerto/The Man Died]posee [...] ciertas resonancias nietzscheanas [...] 'El hombre muere en todos los que guardan silencio frente a la tiranía' [...] "prisión. Es el infierno del siglo XX, en el que la imaginación de Dante temblaría. [...] Entre los grandes descensos al infierno de la literatura de este siglo debe figurar el libro de Soyinka" [...] "Este poder de transfiguración asiente la verdad profunda del libro, su*

condición de obra de arte ..." (R 154)

*"The title possesses a certain Nietzschean resonance [...] 'Man dies in all those who remain silent in front of tyranny' [...]. Prison. This is the inferno of the twentieth century, in which Dante's imagination would quiver. [...] Soyinka's book undoubtedly ranks amongst the great descents into hell in twentieth century literature. [...] The deep truth of the book, its condition of work of art, lies in its power of transfiguration. (R 154)*

*(M. García-Posada in ABC on Wole Soyinka's The Man Died).*

This extract represents one more typical example of a review that tends to become overloaded with literary references. Nietzsche and Dante's Inferno, the two - in this case 'classical' - references somehow aim at putting Soyinka on the same level as the other two authors, at least in terms of grandeur. Once again, it is an operation of comparative literature that might be perceived as too 'intellectual' or 'didactic'.

One last example, taken from R 62.

*" [Naguib Mahfouz's novel 'Entre dos palacios'] es una historia vigorosa, plena de materia narrativa, que cumple de manera venturosa una de las funciones clave de la novela: ser un instrumento privilegiado de conocimiento de la realidad social y antropológica" (R 62)*

*"it is a powerful story, full of narrative stuff, that successfully fulfils one of the key functions of the novel: to be a privileged instrument of knowledge of the social and anthropological reality" (R 62)*

*(M. García-Posada in ABC on Naguib Mahfouz's Palace Walk).*

In this example a kind of (perhaps dogmatic) inclination towards theorising and defining may be detected. Once again, a comparison with other reviewing 'moods' (such as reviewing as the expression of personal opinions or reviewing as direct access to authors/books) would show that the reviewer is underestimating the reader's intelligence and background. One might even wonder whether the reader needs to be reminded that 'one of the key functions of the novel' is 'to be a privileged instrument of knowledge of the social and anthropological reality'.

As a whole, the attitude that characterizes the previous examples is a lecturing or didactic attitude that consolidates and reinforces the rôle of the reader as fulfilling a 'passive' function, a passive recipient of an instructive message.

The lecturing/didactic mood, as has been emphasized, has something in common with reviewing as a display of knowledge. An excess of technical literary terms and references pulls this kind of reviewing towards reviewing as a display of knowledge, whereas an excess of explanations and definitions makes it sound or become purely 'didactic'.

Ironically, the two aspects of this kind of reviewing seem to have paradoxically opposite implications as far as the rôle of the reader is concerned. In one case, the reader's intelligence and background are being overestimated (by an excess of literary reference). In the other case, they are being underestimated (by an excess of didactic explanations).

Both reviewing as a display of knowledge and reviewing as lecturing, however, are characterized by the domination of the reviewer's voice. The main difference between these 'moods' and other 'moods', such as reviewing as direct access to authors for instance, may be regarded in

terms of distribution of the reviewing space.

c) Reviewing as direct access to authors.

This kind of reviewing aims at providing a direct introduction or access to the book and author by means of book extracts or even whole short stories and interviews.

Some examples of this type of reviewing were given earlier on in the previous chapter, in the section on the author as a dominant voice. Two of the four devices that were mentioned before appear to be relevant in this section: the author is assigned the dominant voice by means of quotations (including interviews) and extracts from his book (including whole short stories). Quotations and extracts, as previously emphasized, are the two devices that allow the reader to 'encounter' the author directly.

The first typical example comes from R 132 in which Tahar Ben Jelloun is interviewed by Natalia Aspesi:

*Tahar Ben Jelloun: "È una tappa della mia ricerca che riguarda soprattutto la scrittura" (R 132)*

*Tahar Ben Jelloun: "This stage in my research deals with writing in particular" (R 132)*

*(S. Giovanardi/N. Aspesi in La Repubblica on Tahar Ben Jelloun's The Sand Child).*

In this extract communication takes place between the author and the reader, apparently without the agency of the reviewer. The reviewer has disappeared though, in fact, he is still there, he keeps orchestrating the whole process of reviewing. He has simply decided to remain

silent and let the author speak.

R 280 - this is one more typical example of this kind of reviewing - is followed by a short story by Ngugi wa Thiong'o.

(Cristiana Pugliese in Il Manifesto on Ngugi wa Thiong'o).

In R 280, the reviewer allows the author to become the dominant voice by means of a combination of three devices: reported point of view, quotations and a whole short story. The author's quotations are followed by a short story - translated by the reviewer. Two pages of the newspaper are devoted to the short story and this allows the reader to encounter the author, to feel a sense of achievement while experiencing the literary operation, the joint literary operation, with immediacy and directness.

This reviewing 'mood' is typical of the cases in which the reviewer decides to remain silent and assigns most of the reviewing space to the author, with the aim of providing readers with maximum direct access to the author reviewed.

This approach may be regarded as the opposite of those reviews in which the reviewer plays a major rôle, such as reviewing as the expression of personal opinion, reviewing as lecturing or reviewing as 'fast food'.

d) Reviewing as the overt expression of a personal opinion.

First of all, one should remember that a review, even when the reviewer decides to remain silent and let the author introduce or review himself, still remains the expression of a personal opinion. Whether he represents the dominant voice or not, the reviewer remains the person who orchestrates the voices inside a review. In this sense, he may be regarded as the omniscient 'director' or the coordinator of voices.

This type of reviewing has something in common with reviewing as a display of knowledge. This shows that, more often than not, reviews are characterized by more than one mood, one of which tends to dominate while others occasionally come to the surface.

This type of reviewing, often written by a high profile public persona, is characterized by a great deal of emphasis on the personal perception of the book.

The first characteristic example comes from R 172:

*"Se qualcuno mi chiedesse quale lettura mi ha più arricchito in questi ultimi mesi, risponderei: i drammi di Wole Soyinka. [...] Senza il Nobel non so fino a quando avrei rinviato la lettura. [...] Non sono qui per scoprire la letteratura e il teatro africano. Come l'Antonio del Giulio Cesare di Shakespeare sono qui per dire ciò che so: vale a dire pochissimo in questa materia. Ma è forse per questo che, cadendo in terra così vergine, il seme di Soyinka mi sta crescendo dentro con il rigoglio di un baobab" (R 172)*

*"If anyone were to ask me which book has enriched me more in the last few months, I would certainly answer: Soyinka's plays. [...] Without the Nobel Prize, I doubt I would have read them ... [...] I am not here to discover African literature and theatre. Like Anthony in Shakespeare's Julius Caesar, I am here to say what I know, which is very little in this case. But this is probably the reason why, having fallen in such a virgin land, Soyinka's seed is growing inside me with the exuberance of a baobab" (R 172)*

*(Italo A. Chiusano in L'Osservatore Romano on Wole Soyinka's The Man Died).*

This example shows how difficult - and perhaps artificial - it is to isolate one mood from the others in a review. In the present extract at least two moods could be perceived:

- reviewing as expressing a personal opinion;
- reviewing as a display of knowledge;

The display of knowledge is manifest in the reference to Shakespeare's 'Julius Caesar'.

However, taken as a whole, the extract is also the overt expression of a personal opinion. In fact, this appears to be the dominant mood. The emphasis is clearly on the subjective experience. Technically, the result and the style are the same as in many other cases: what happens is what might be regarded as an appropriation of reviewing space performed by the reviewer. The extensive use of the first person pronoun - eight times in both the English and the Italian versions - demonstrates this point.

The next example comes from R 43:

*"If I hesitate to say that I found the novel too obviously*

*didactic, and the characters themselves too obviously mouthpieces for the author's views, it is partly because I very much admire (and agree with) the author's intentions, and partly because the very simplicity, which has the quality of a fable, might have worked better in the original" (R 43)*

*(A. Maja-Pearce in The Independent on Ngugi wa Thiong'o's Matigari).*

R 43 is still characterized by the use of the first person pronoun. However, its style and imagery are much less exuberant than those in R 172. The reviewer is simply expressing a personal opinion, trying to remain professionally cool or emotionally detached and fully in control of the situation. Consequently, there is no concession to contrived or simply affective imagery

The last examples are taken from R 6;

*" Most of us, if we have been properly brought up, will have been subjected without realising it to Oriental, Arabic influences in our early reading. [...] Much of the stuff of fairy story originates in a culture different from our own, yet lives in our memories. I say this because I feared that I might find 'Palace Walk' by Naguib Mahfouz alien and difficult to follow and yet I felt at home from the first page: with a sense of familiarity and ease" (R 6)*

*(A. Thomas Ellis in The Guardian on Naguib Mahfouz's Palace Walk).*

*" We are told what they [the characters] wear and what they eat, and while this last may seem trivial I get annoyed with authors who write loftily that their characters had a good meal without revealing what it consisted of" (R 6)*

R 6 represents an example of a high-profile public persona (a well-known and established author in the



United Kingdom) who feels extremely confident while reviewing another author and who shows herself to be perfectly at ease while expressing her own opinions.

In other words, the reviewer is saying very clearly to the reader that she is not going to disguise herself behind impersonal statements, nor is she going to let the author speak directly. She is simply going to voice her own impressions and express her own opinions. In this case the reviewer is probably encouraged to act in this way by the fact that she is a public persona.

e) Overtly ideological reviewing.

This approach is characterized by an overt attack of some discourse or stance that the reviewer perceives as wrong or evil. In this case, a review may be regarded as a text aimed at shaking people's conscience while dismantling expectations and creating awareness.

This kind of reviewing 'mood' is a direct reflection of the fact that Western discourse is made up of a multiplicity of voices representing different ideologies or positions that exist inside the discourse itself. Some voices are dominant, whereas others are perceived or regard themselves as subordinate or perhaps one could say dissenting.

The first typical examples come from R 49:

*"[reference to Kenya] an entire population being squeezed to death by the local servants of the US and European multinational companies" (R 49)*

*"These may not be the central criteria generally accepted for excellent and effective literature in university seminar rooms and within the pages of learned critical tomes, but they form the foundation of the literature we need, in order to strike chords of consciousness and begin to change the world around us" (R 49)*

*(Chris Searle in The Morning Star on Ngugi wa Thiong'o's Matigari).*

R 49 may be regarded as potentially 'subversive' for the way in which Kenya and literature are introduced. As was said in the introduction to Chapters Four, Five and Six, a certain Western aesthetic/literary/cultural domination can be linked directly with the imperialist and neocolonialistic domination whose presence - so reviewers claim - can be tracked down to the most intimate roots of speech and signification. R 49 seems to express this view in a clear way. The reference to American and European multinational companies and their role in Kenya are subversive in the sense that they provide some background information capable of creating a powerful link between literature and the current situation in Kenya. The notion of literature itself is challenged and explored in R 49 when the reviewer emphasizes the need to 'strike chords of consciousness' amongst readers.

The other examples come from R 174:

*[On an anthology of African theatre] la scelta drammatica della lingua, o inglese o francese, la quale rappresenta [...] uno dei maggiori strumenti di oppressione colonialistica, e che d'altronde si presta a diventare uno strumento espressivo nuovo [...] non a caso Salman Rushdie [...] osservava ironicamente nella sua ottica di indiano messo di fronte a modelli inglesi che è ora per la letteratura inglese di decolonizzarsi, grazie all'apporto sempre più originale proprio dei paesi ex coloniali. [...] ['La voce' e 'teatro Africano'] sbarazzano il luogo comune tra il paternalistico e l'assistenziale del mito della negritudine, elargito nel secondo dopoguerra dall'intellighentzia europea, specie francese, la retorica equivoca del terzomondismo..." (R 174)*

*" The choice of the language, either English or French represents one of the main instruments of colonialistic oppression but it is also capable of becoming a new*

*expressive instrument. [...] As Salman Rushdie ironically remarked - and his viewpoint is that of the Indian who is facing English models - the time has come for English literature to decolonise itself, thanks to the increasingly original contribution of former colonies. [...] [These two books - 'La voce' and 'Teatro africano'] dismantle the paternalistic commonplace of the myth of negritude, spread after the second world war by the European intelligentsia, French in particular, the ambiguous rhetoric of Third Worldism..." (R 174) (Claudio Gorlier in La Stampa on Wole Soyinka)*

In R 174 the notion of literature itself is being reasserted, while the myth of negritude is being challenged. Again, myths and commonplaces are being unmasked and decoded in a somehow brutal way in order for consciousness and awareness to be created amongst readers.

This type of reviewing therefore points out the constant struggle that takes place between voices and positions within the Western discourse. Newspaper reviewing is by its nature a field of ideological contention where voices and positions constantly challenge one another. Some voices simply assert themselves, whereas others feel or show the need to attack other voices that are perceived as dominant (or false, or wrong, or evil). Voices perform their attacks or challenges by means of their (presumed or potential) subversiveness.

f) Reviewing as cultural 'fast food'.

This kind of 'cool' and apparently professional reviewing is typical of many short reviews (about 120-140 words), often found in the 'new fiction' section of literary pages. It seems to do very little apart from trying to persuade people to buy (or not to buy) certain books, often by means of literary cliches and interchangeable expressions.

However, while doing so, this kind of reviewing does something more important. It allows one to see that newspaper reviews represent a particular cultural product, a 'genre' one could almost say, a product that is meant for quick consumption and therefore may be regarded as a kind of cultural 'fast food'.

The following examples are taken from R 136, R 141 and R 36. They are all characterized by short, potentially interchangeable statements.

*"Few writers of our time, of any time, have projected their own voice strongly enough to establish the language of a personal myth. Amos Tutuola did it three decades ago when the Palm-wine Drinker magically lurched on to the world stage, telling tall stories straight from the Nigerian tribal well-springs but shaping them into a wonderful preposterous one-man idiom. [...] Only a cynic*

would say that the village story teller's art has not got it taped, but it would be asking too much to expect that a new Tutuola like *Pauper, Brawler and Slanderer* is going to astonish us all over again. It's the authentic voice though." (R 141)

(Norman Shrapnel in The Guardian on Amos Tutuola's *Pauper, Brawler and Slanderer*).

The second example comes from R 136:

"The blend of the fantastic and the everyday in Amos Tutuola's *Pauper, Brawler and Slanderer* is on the level of folk-tale or the peasant pictures of Brueghel.[...] Mr Tutuola uses a literary equivalent of the sing-song cadences of African oral story-telling to unique and magical effect" (R 136)

(K. McL. in The Daily Telegraph on Amos Tutuola's *Pauper, Brawler and Slanderer*).

The last extract comes from R 36:

"Indeed, the plot is enough to depress and make women readers very angry .[...] Nevertheless, it is an amusing, haunting and ultimately depressing story, without an end" (R 36)

(Julia Neuberger in The Daily Telegraph on Tahar Ben Jelloun's *The Sand Child*).

What all these typical extracts have in common is a particular use of adjectives. The use of adjectives probably represents the most prominent feature of this type of reviewing. Books tend to be defined by means of adjectives such as 'authentic', 'unique', 'magical', 'amusing', 'haunting'.

Perhaps, one could claim that these adjectives are interchangeable in the sense that they could be easily applied to any book (once the reviewer has decided whether he intends to celebrate or 'slate' a book).

Adjectives tend to be used in their widest possible - and therefore perhaps most ambiguous - meaning in these reviews.

These reviews very often only seem to fulfil one aim: commoditising literature and responding to market pressures.

Several examples of reviews (including whole reviews) characterized by this type of aim or 'mood' will be provided, later on, in Chapter Eight. Chapter Eight will be devoted to an analysis of very short reviews, ie those reviews that do not usually exceed 150 words. Moreover, it will tackle the related notions of sterotype images and the presumed interchangeability of literary clichés or 'tags'.

## Conclusion

This chapter aimed at demonstrating that a number of regular 'moods' or 'tones' may be found in reviewing as far as the potential aims of a review are concerned.

Some of the 'moods' have turned up to be linked with or perhaps to result from the distribution of the reviewing space. The author as a dominant voice characterizes reviewing as direct access to books, whereas the reviewer as a dominant voice is typical of reviewing as a display of knowledge, as lecturing and as the expression of a personal opinion.

Several 'moods' and related aims have been identified and they may be regarded as different ways of informing, each of which tends to be characterized by a certain 'tone'.

A comparative categorization of the most typical 'moods' has been attempted in this analysis. What follows is a list of the most frequently identifiable tones:



a) Reviewing as a display of knowledge.

This 'mood' is capable of hindering the flow of information, while undermining the objective of informing. The hindrance takes place by means of a concentration of specialized (ie not reader-friendly) information.

b) Reviewing as lecturing.

This 'mood' consolidates the rôle of the reader as fulfilling a passive function. This type of reviewing is written in a didactic style that sounds comparatively too 'serious', heavy, cryptic or dogmatic, due to both the linguistic register and the lexicon used.

c) Reviewing as direct access to the author.

This type of reviewing provides direct access to the author reviewed by means of interviews, book extracts or whole short stories. Technically, this 'mood' may be regarded as the opposite of both reviewing as a display of knowledge and reviewing as lecturing.

d) Reviewing as the overt expression of a personal opinion.

This type of reviewing has something in common with reviewing as a display of knowledge. It is characterized by a great deal of emphasis on the reviewer's personal perception of the book.

e) Overtly ideological reviewing.

This 'mood' is characterized by an overt attack of some ideological stance perceived by the reviewer as false or

wrong. A review in this sense may be regarded as a text overtly aimed at creating awareness amongst readers while dismantling their expectations and shaking their conscience.

f) Reviewing as cultural 'fast food'.

This kind of reviewing, often found in the 'new fiction' section shows that a newspaper review may also be regarded a cultural product meant for quick consumption, simply aimed at persuading readers to buy (or not to buy) a certain book, often by means of literary clichés and interchangeable stereotype images.

In reality, as the extracts analysed in the case of each type of reviewing demonstrated, very often more than one 'mood' or 'tone' may be found in a review, although, in each article, one of the tones seems to be the dominant one.

## CHAPTER SIX

### REPRESENTATION TECHNIQUES IN THE REVIEWING OF AFRICAN LITERATURE

#### Introduction

This chapter will deal with the different domestication or familiarization techniques adopted in the representation of White South African, Black African (Subsaharan) and North African literature.

'Domestication' techniques may be regarded as ways of representing otherness. In this context, the books and the authors that are the subject of reviews may be seen as 'other', at least from the reader's viewpoint.

Therefore, this chapter will look at ways of both providing readers with background information and guidelines, and using and coordinating literary, historical and political references in a review.

Chapter Six will be divided into three sections, each of which will tackle one particular geographic area: (White) South Africa, Black (Subsaharan) Africa and North Africa.

The present chapter aims at answering the following two

main questions:

1) Do domestication techniques tend to change in accordance with the origin of the author and book reviewed? In other words, are there any 'typical' or 'common' (and thus predictable) ways of introducing/representing White South African, Black African or North African literature?

2) Do literary and/or political references tend to change across the political spectrum? In other words, are the ideological implications of a newspaper always manifest (and therefore predictable) in reviewing?

In order to answer the first question, the reviews will be analysed on the basis of each group of authors and books: (White) South Africans, Black Africans and North Africans.

As far as the second question is concerned, the same reviews and authors will be taken into account according to each group of newspapers. Newspapers have been grouped in the following way:

- left-wing:

The Morning Star

L'Humanité

Il Manifesto

- left of centre (progressive press):

The Guardian

The Independent

Le Monde

La Repubblica

El País

- right of centre:

La Stampa

La Vanguardia

- right:

The Daily/Sunday Telegraph

Le Figaro

ABC

- Catholic press:

L'Osservatore Romano

In this part of the analysis, the notion of 'ambiguity' might become relevant. 'Ambiguity' in this particular context, as was pointed out in the Introduction to Part Two of this thesis, is the 'hidden text', ie what a text (a review) - deliberately or not - does not say. In other words, it is what a text/review only says or displays by means of a comparison with other texts/reviews dealing with the same book or author.

A look at Table 11 (which can be found at the end of this introduction), in which the papers analysed are divided into five groups according to their political stance, whereas writers are divided into three groups according to their origin in Africa, should immediately point to two considerations.

The first one is that (White) South African authors tend to be ignored by left-wing newspapers. Only one review of a book by a White South African author (Something Out There by Nadine Gordimer) has been found amongst the left-wing dailies (in the French Communist daily paper L'Humanité).

The second consideration deals with the right-hand side of Table 11, where the absence of any reviews of books by Ngugi wa Thiong'o can be noticed. The data shows that the Kenyan author's Marxist stance does not seem to be particularly welcome amongst right-wing and Catholic

newspapers.

The above considerations, even before trying to answer Question 2 on the basis of a detailed analysis, would lead one so far as to say that, taken as a whole, the ideological stance of a newspaper tends to be manifest, and thus predictable, at the level of literary reviewing, mainly in terms of selection of books and authors.

Question 1, dealing with domestication or familiarization techniques in the representation of African literature, will now be tackled. In order to find out how newspapers tend to provide background information and guidelines and how they use literary, political or historical references, African literature has been divided into three main geographic areas: (White) South Africa, Black (Subsaharan) Africa and North Africa.

With the aim of providing an answer to <sup>u</sup>Question 2, in the course of the same analysis, newspapers characterized by different ideological stances have been taken into account for each geographic area.

(areas)	WSA		BA			NA	
(authors)	NG	JMC	WS	AT	NWT	NM	TBJ
(papers)							
<u>MORN.STAR</u>					X		
<u>HUMANITE</u>	X					X	
<u>MANIFESTO</u>			X	X	X	X	
<u>REPUBBLICA</u>						X	X
<u>GUARDIAN</u>	X	X		X	X	X	
<u>INDEPENDENT</u>					X	X	
<u>LE MONDE</u>		X				X	X
<u>EL PAIS</u>	X	2X	X			X	
<u>VANGUARDIA</u>	X		X				X
<u>STAMPA</u>	X	X	X	2X			
<u>TELEGRAPH</u>				2X			X
<u>FIGARO</u>	X					X	X
<u>ABC</u>	X	X	X			2X	
<u>OSSERV ROM</u>	X		2X				

Table 11: geographic distribution of reviews on the basis of newspapers characterized by different ideological stances. (The table is based on a number of reviews selected in the thematic analysis carried out in Chapter Six).

### Contextualization of the data shown in Table 11

The data displayed in Table 11 might be misleading in the sense that it might lead one to conclude that all geographic areas of African literature are equally represented in European newspapers reviewing.

However, in Chapters Two and Three (in the statistical approach to newspaper reviewing), it has been pointed out that Black African literature tends to be underrepresented, whereas White South African literature dominates.

Chapter Six belongs to a series of Chapters (Chapters Four, Five and Six) that look at aspects of the reviewing of African literature from a different perspective, a mainly thematic one.

Therefore, in order to be able to tackle certain aspects of reviewing (those pointed out by Questions 1 and 2 in the present chapter), reviews have been selected regardless of strictly statistical implications, although it must be stressed that all the authors analysed in the present Chapter belong to the so-called 'Top 16' of African literature (identified in Chapter Two), ie they may be found amongst the African authors most frequently reviewed in Europe.

On the other hand, in order to try to answer Questions 1 and 2, it has been regarded as necessary to analyse an as equal as possible number of reviews for each geographic area of African literature.



A brief theoretical introduction to the concepts of 'stereotype' and 'denial of coevalness', terms often utilized in the development of Chapter Six in particular, is probably necessary at this stage.

### Stereotypes

As far as the notion of stereotype is concerned, it will often be adopted in the analysis of different ways of representing otherness.

The word 'stereotype' is generally used in a pejorative way. In Chapter Six it will often appear in conjunction with a reference to commonplaces, frozen images, exotic otherness and the denial of coevalness.

It is now important to stress the fact that stereotypes cannot always be regarded as pejorative elements in a discourse. Instead, a close look at them would show that they are essential elements of cultural communication.

In fact, the whole notion of a stereotype urgently needs some kind of re-thinking that allows one to point to the ideological function of stereotypes.

According to some dominant (and yet partly misleading) assumptions, the content of stereotypes is always erroneous and pejorative. Moreover, they are often regarded as dealing with social groups (oppressed/minorities etc.) with whom one has little or

no social contact. Finally, they are generally thought to be simple and rigid.

However, stereotypes need to be regarded in the context of a complex social structure, in which they behave like symbols, a context that shows that *'they are simple and complex'* (1) at the same time.

Michèle Barrett et al, in Ideology and Cultural Production, claim that rethinking stereotypes means becoming aware that *'the fact that there is a higher consensus (uniformity) about the adjectives which describe the characteristics of some groups, than there is about those which describe other groups, may tell us a lot about the social situation of the group being described, and does not necessarily imply prejudice or distortion. It may be the case that members of this group can "legitimately" be characterized by three of four attributes'* (2).

The central problem of stereotypes thus appears to be the question of accuracy.

Moreover, they add, *'the strength of a stereotype results from a combination of three factors: its "simplicity"; its immediate recognisability (which makes its communicative role very important), and its implicit reference to an assumed consensus about some attribute or complex social relationship. Stereotypes in this respect are prototypes of "shared cultural meanings"'* (3).

Finally, in order to correct the misleading assumptions previously mentioned, one should be aware of the fact that stereotypes can also be positive concepts.

The re-definition of stereotypes should therefore be based on a wider-ranging approach based on the awareness that the simple structures often attributed to stereotypes often conceal complex realities.

Stereotypes should be regarded as concepts (ie, selective cognitive organising systems, features of human thought) whose wide distribution does not mean that people necessarily believe in them.

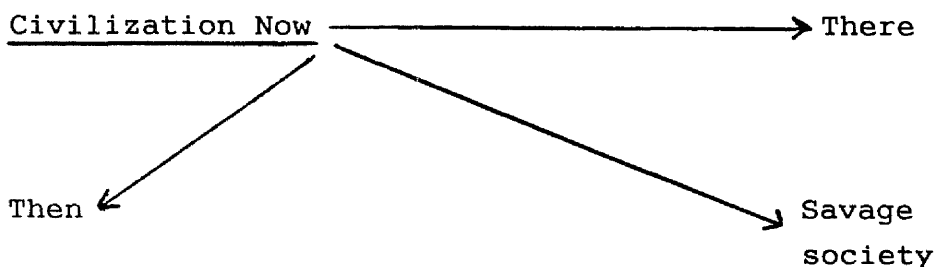
The essential rôle of stereotypes, seems to be that they *'short-circuit critical thinking; their effectiveness depends in part on our willingness to short-circuit. Our willingness derives from two things: firstly, it may simply make life easier, more convenient; the other is that information may be limited and our critical faculties may be underdeveloped, and effectively we may often have no other choice but to short-circuit'* (4).

#### The denial of coevalness

As far as the notion of denial of coevalness is concerned, it originates from Johannes Fabian's Time and the Other, in which he surveys the uses of time in anthropological discourse.

On the basis of the awareness that time, like language, is a carrier of significance and a form through which the content of relations between the one's self and the Other are defined, Johannes Fabian claims that *'once Time is recognized as a dimension, not just a measure, of human activity, any attempt to eliminate it from interpretive discourse can only result in distorted and largely meaningless representations'* (5).

Fabian displays his theory of representation of otherness in a figure (6):



The figure may be regarded as *'a system of coordinates (emanating from a real center - the Western metropolis) in which given societies of all times and places may be plotted in terms of relative distance from the present'* (7).

As Fabian puts it, *'what makes the savage significant to the evolutionist's Time is that he lives in another Time'* (8).

As will be demonstrated throughout Chapter Six, the figure applies to the literary joint social operation and to the reviewing of African literature in particular. The reviewing operation takes place (ie, the review of a book is written) in the place where coordinates emanate (the real centre, one might perhaps define it the Euro-ethno-anthropological centre), whereas the reality represented by the book of African literature stands where 'there', 'then', or 'savage society' are. This may be regarded as the starting point of each review of African literature. Each reviewer has to come to terms with that distance.

However, as will be pointed out in Chapter Six (the analysis of different ways of representing otherness) not all reviews are characterized by a denial of

coevalness. Some of them will be able to point out and illustrate the coevalness of the two cultures.

It is almost as if a reviewer had different options when it comes to dealing with a book of African literature. Very often, the tendency will be pointed out for reviewers to assign a different time to African societies (with the help of various sequencing and distancing devices). The use of frozen images, oversimplification and generalization, has already been illustrated in Chapters Four and Five.

However, it is now worth looking at Fabian's view in detail: *'Physical Time [in anthropological discourse] is seldom used in its naked, chronological form. More often than not chronologies shade into [...] Typological Time. As distancing devices, categorizations of this kind are used, for instance, when we are told that certain elements in our culture are "neolithic" or "archaic"; or when certain living societies are said to practice "stone age economies"; or when certain styles of thought are identified as "savage" or "primitive". Labels that connote temporal distancing need not have explicitly temporal references (such as cyclical or repetitive). Adjectives like mythical, ritual or even tribal, will serve the same function. They, too, connote temporal distancing as a way of creating the objects or referents in anthropological discourse'* (9).

Such aspects of reviewing will be identified several times throughout this piece of research in the extracts from reviews of African literature. The lexicographic analysis (frequently used adjectives, presence of dominant or favourite words) will prove to be useful in this respect. Adjectives such as *mythical*, *tribal*, or nouns such as *tragedy* now appear to become even more relevant on the basis of Fabian's theory.

Fabian concludes by providing one more definition of the

environment in which the reviewing of African literature takes place (with stress on the ideological implications): *'anthropology cannot do without anchoring its knowledge, through research, in specific groups or societies; otherwise it would no longer be anthropology but metaphysical speculations disguised as an empirical science. [...] Relationships between anthropology and its object are inevitably political; production of knowledge occurs in a public forum of intergroup, interclass, and international relations'* (10).

Finally, he stresses the importance of coevalness in a way that further illustrates why a reviewing approach that recognizes coevalness will be defined as a wide-ranging one in this thesis:

*'coevalness aims at recognizing contemporaneity as the condition for truly dialectical confrontation between persons as well as societies. It militates [like committed reviewing] against false conceptions of dialectics - all those watered-down binary abstractions which are passed off as oppositions: left vs right, past vs present, primitive vs modern. Tradition and modernity are not "opposed" (except semiotically), nor are they in "conflict". [...] What are opposed, in conflict, in fact, locked in antagonistic struggle, are [...] different societies facing each other at the same time. [...] The "savage and the proletarian" are in equivalent positions vis-à-vis domination'* (11).

### Notes

- (1) 'Rethinking stereotypes'  
Ideology and Cultural Production  
ed. by Michèle Barrett, Philip Corrigan,  
Annette Kuh, Janet Wolff  
Croom Helm, London, 1979, p. 139
- (2) Ibid.
- (3) Ibid., p. 141
- (4) Ibid., p. 155
- (5) Johannes Fabian  
Time and the Other  
Columbia U. P. , New York, 1983, p. 24
- (6) Ibid., p. 27
- (7) Ibid., p. 26
- (8) Ibid., p. 27
- (9) Ibid., p. 30
- (10) Ibid., p. 143
- (11) Ibid., p. 154-155

## SECTION ONE: WHITE SOUTH AFRICAN LITERATURE

### a) Nadine Gordimer

Nadine Gordimer is reviewed in only one left-wing paper, the French L'Humanité, which is where the following extracts are taken from:

*"Ces récits sont variés mais chacun, d'une façon ou d'une autre, nous fait côtoyer un abîme"*

[...]

*"L'essentiel des récits présentés ici a pour cadre la République Sud-Africaine, l'oppression des masses noires"*

[...]

*"Les Français qui ne passent pas leur temps à refouler le passé colonial (sans parler du présent) seront sensibles à des récits qui leur rappelleront quelque chose là-bas. Pas si loin, ni dans le temps, ni dans l'espace!"*

[R 232]

*"These stories are varied but each of them, somehow, takes us to the brink of an abyss"*

[...]

*"Most of these short stories are set in South Africa, with the oppression of the Black masses"*

[...]

*"Those French who do not spend their time trying to forget their colonial past (not to mention the present) will be sensitive to these tales that will remind them of something out there. Something not too far, either in time or in space!"*



[R 232]

(Claude Prévost in L'Humanité on Nadine Gordimer's Something Out There).

The three key references that characterize this representation are: the oppression of Black masses, the colonial past and, finally, the colonial present. The book in question in this case is represented as aimed at providing readers with an opportunity to learn more about the situation in South Africa, a situation that the reviewer contextualizes even further in terms of a widespread (it involves the reviewer's and the presumed reader's own country!) and still active colonialism.

The domestication of otherness (ie the introduction of the book) in this review is achieved by means of a representation characterized by emphasis on mainly ideological/historical references. The literary or artistic qualities of the book do not seem to be given priority in the representation.

This points to the fact that the main rôle of literature in this review is that of an instrument aimed at taking part in the struggle against apartheid and neo-colonialism, by means of creating awareness amongst the readers.

The following extracts are taken from two progressive papers (ie left-of-centre but not as much to the left as the previous newspaper): The Guardian and El País.

*"Like the thrifty housekeepers of the past, Nadine Gordimer is a writer who, with their jars of pieces of string too short for any immediate use, will nevertheless join them or secure with them a tiny bouquet, or even simply display them as minimalist art. She is capable with the means of a few dull lengths of knitting magically a coat of many colours. Although, mostly, of course, she is known for her juxtaposition and blending of black and*

white"

[...]

*"The novella 'Something Out There', back in the suburbs of Johannesburg [...] fails to deliver the message that was presumably intended. Here, the neat strings can be seen lined up, but they just don't knit into a pattern"*

[R 243]

*(Emma Tennant in The Guardian on Nadine Gordimer's Something Out There).*

In this case the book is introduced by means of a blending of literary and political references. The language the reviewer has resorted to is 'literary' in the sense that its imagery is creative and colourful (especially in comparison with the previous extract).

The review contains an implication that the book in question should be read for both its political message (the reference to the South African situation and the blending of black and white) and its literary value (the reference to being capable of 'knitting magically a coat of many colours').

A comparison between this review and R 232 (L'Humanité) allows one to see that the South African situation is referred to by means of a completely different kind of vocabulary: ie 'the oppression of the Black masses' as opposed to 'her juxtaposition and blending of black and white'.

The following extract comes from El Pais although it is a translation of an article originally published in Italian by La Repubblica.

*"Ella se siente una africana blanca ajena al pensamiento dominante"*

[...]

*"Se trata de libros que han nacido de imperceptibles solicitudes de un episodio, de un encuentro, y que luego encuentran su marco en la más amplia situación surafricana"*

[R 207]

*"She considers herself a White African who is outside the dominant ideology"*

[...]

*"Her books, whose roots lie in imperceptible creative urges or encounters, are all set in the wider context of the South African situation"*

[R 207]

*(Irene Bignardi in La Repubblica on Nadine Gordimer's Something Out There).*

Again, the book is introduced by means of a double, ie political and literary, reference. The political reference is carried by the description of the author as an 'outsider' in South Africa. The stories are introduced by means of a reference to the very beginning of the literary 'creation' or operation, that is the events that caused the stories to be conceived in the author's mind.

Before dealing with the right-wing newspapers, two more papers, La Stampa and La Vanguardia, are worth analysing. These two papers, as a whole, tend to mirror ideological positions that could be defined 'right-of-centre' or even 'right' at times. Their literary magazines, however, do not necessarily reflect the same ideological viewpoints, at least as far as La Stampa is concerned.

The first extract is taken from the Barcelona daily La Vanguardia.

*"Un repentino interés ha caído sobre la obra [...] de Nadine Gordimer, varias veces candidata al premio Nobel*

*sin fortuna. Es una de las curiosas sacudidas editoriales que podría explicar fácilmente cualquier técnico de marketing"*

*[...]*

*"Nadine Gordimer es uno de los máximos exponentes literarios antiapartheid y manifiesta opiniones polémicas en la prensa mundial. Algunos de sus libros han sido prohibidos en su país y sin embargo (¡o tal vez por ello!) la crítica europea y americana le ha prestado su atención y concedido numerosos premios"*

*[...]*

*"Caracterizadas por una reincidente preocupación antiapartheid, las obras de Gordimer suelen mantenerse en la frágil cuerda de equilibrio entre compromiso y arte. La fuerza política de sus escritos se debate con la observación psicológica y la descripción casi documental"*

*[R 163]*

*"The sudden interest in Nadine Gordimer's works - she has already been a Nobel Prize candidate several times - is one of those strange publishing shocks that any marketing expert would no doubt be able to explain quite easily"*

*[...]*

*"Nadine Gordimer is one of the main writers who oppose apartheid. She has always expressed her polemic views in the world press. Some of her books have been banned in her country and probably (or perhaps therefore!) European and American critics have been particularly interested in her and awarded her several prizes"*

*[...]*

*"Her books, characterized by a very powerful anti-apartheid stance, usually move on that tight and fragile rope that exists between commitment and art. The political power of her works struggles against her psychological observation and the almost documentary descriptions."*

*[R 163]*

(Susana Camps in La Vanguardia on Nadine Gordimer's Something Out There).

The representation in this review is once again characterized by a double reference, to the political situation in South Africa and to the literary qualities of the author's work. However, an element of irony tends to inform most of the literary references. In particular, this may be seen in both the references to the Nobel Prize and its effects in terms of marketing, and in the criteria that, according to the reviewer, are usually applied by European and American critics in the selection of African writers (ie critics seem to choose authors simply because their books have been banned in South Africa, though perhaps regardless of any particular literary qualities).

The following extract is taken from La Stampa.

*"Questo racconto costituisce un'introduzione eccellente in quanto presenta in forma sintetica e con eccellenza stilistica alcuni dei temi caratteristici dell'autrice. Il più vistoso di tali temi riguarda ovviamente la condizione di un paese lacerato dall'apparentemente insanabile conflitto fra sfruttatori bianchi e sfruttati di altro colore. Nel mostrare questo conflitto la Gordimer, ammirevole esponente della tradizione cosiddetta liberal, denuncia la situazione con tono efficace"*

[...]

*"La Gordimer sembra sempre porgere solo quello che conosce davvero, e pertanto convince anche quando ci parla dall'interno, poniamo, della testa di un giovane di colore"*

[R 210]

*"These short stories represent an excellent introduction since they contain, in a synthetic though stylistically*

*excellent form, some of the themes that characterize the writer. The most striking theme is obviously the condition of a country that is wounded by an apparently hopeless conflict between White oppressors and oppressed of other colours. Nadine Gordimer, an admirable exponent of the so-called liberal tradition, describes such a situation in a powerful and effective way"*

*[...]*

*"Nadine Gordimer always seems to write only about things she really knows. Therefore, she sounds convincing even when, say, she is expressing the point of view of a Black young man."*

*[R 210]*

*(Masolino D'Amico in La Stampa on Nadine Gordimer's Something Out There).*

The book and the author, once again, are introduced by means of a double reference to both her political commitment and her literary merits. In this case, however, the overall mood is a celebratory one, especially in comparison with the previous review, characterized by a kind of irony or understatement.

The celebratory tone may be detected in the words (in the adjectives in particular) used by the reviewer: 'stylistically excellent', 'admirable', 'effective descriptions', 'convincing' etc.

These extracts show that the use of irony or paean, for instance, depends on the reviewer's personal viewpoint and choice. What is particularly relevant in the present chapter, however, is that, once again, the domestication of otherness takes place by means of a double (ideological/political and literary/artistic) reference.

As far as the right-wing papers are concerned, the first review is taken from Le Figaro.

*"Ses anathèmes contre l'apartheid l'ont révélée au monde entier au risque de masquer l'écrivain"*

[...]

*"reconnue comme l'une des plus grandes romancières contemporaines, et surtout comme l'une des meilleures nouvellistes de la tradition anglo-saxonne"*

[R 220]

*"Her anathema against apartheid revealed her to the whole world at the risk of hiding the writer in her [ie her literary qualities]"*

[...]

*"She is considered one of the greatest contemporary novelists and one of the best narrators in the Anglo-Saxon tradition"*

[R 220]

*(A. Muratori-Philips in Le Figaro on Nadine Gordimer's Something Out There).*

In this review, the writer is introduced by means of mainly literary references. Her political commitment is mentioned, however it is not emphasized as it was in other reviews previously analysed. In this case, the author's literary merits are emphasized. This may be detected in phrases such as 'the risk of hiding the writer in her', 'one of the greatest novelists', 'one of the best narrators in the Anglo-Saxon tradition'.

Moreover, in the process of domestication, the author seems to be defined by means of clear categorization. In fact, she is labelled as belonging to a certain literary tradition.

The following extract is taken from the Spanish right-wing paper ABC.

*"Su pronta traducción española confirma el interés internacional por la autora, cuya candidatura al Nobel ha sonado ya con fuerza. Dada la relación de su escritura con*

*la realidad sudafricana no sería extraño que se le concediese el galardón, calidades aparte: la historia de los Nobel indica, con abrumadora frecuencia, que sin ese gancho político es difícil la consecución del premio. Cuando la Academia decide ser 'literaria', casi siempre hay un escritor francés para ser premiado"*

*[...]*

*"Con Nobel o sin él, Nadine Gordimer es una excelente narradora, como este volumen viene a corroborar"*

*[R 157]*

*"Her sudden translation into Spanish shows the international interest towards this writer who has already been a Nobel Prize candidate. Because of the links between her writing and the South African reality, it would not be surprising if she were awarded the Prize, regardless of the literary qualities of her books. The history of the Nobel Prize shows that, with embarrassing frequency, for a writer who does not have a political 'hook' it is very unlikely to be awarded the prize. When the Swedish Academy decides to be 'literary', there is always a French writer to be awarded"*

*[...]*

*"However, with or without Nobel, Nadine Gordimer is an excellent narrator, as these stories demonstrate"*

*[R 157]*

*(M. García-Posada in ABC on Nadine Gordimer's Something Out There).*

The author is introduced mainly by means of literary references. The contextualization includes an ironic, perhaps even sarcastic, reference to the Nobel Prize and the Swedish Academy. According to the reviewer, it is not necessary for a writer (unless he is a French writer - a clear reference to Claude Simon!) to have any literary merits for him to be awarded the Nobel Prize. Having a kind of political involvement seems to suffice. The second extract (of R 157), however, appears to be much 'calmer' in tone and deals mainly with the writer's



literary qualities.

As far as Nadine Gordimer is concerned, this chapter has so far shown that, as one moves from left-wing towards right-wing newspapers, more importance tends to be given to the literary qualities of the author. At the same time, one notices that political references tend to become less and less relevant.

In other words, the representation tends to become increasingly literary while political references tend to become increasingly sparse or weak. Words such as 'struggle' or 'oppression' are used less frequently in reviews taken from right-wing newspapers.

Finally, a look at the Catholic press is relevant at this stage. The following extract is taken from L'Osservatore Romano.

*"Il suo animus di scrittrice si apre a dimensioni universali, facendo vedere il dramma dei fratelli contro fratelli"*

[...]

*"Nei suoi romanzi [...] non c'è solo il Sudafrica con il dramma dell'apartheid, [...] c'è anche [...] il bisogno di un richiamo più vero all'unione di popoli e di animi, proprio nell'urgenza di mettere in guardia [...] e non ripetere gli errori che sono stati fatti in altri Paesi africani"*

[R 236]

*"Her animus of writer opens up to universal dimensions, thus showing the tragedy of brothers against brothers"*  
[...]

*"In her novels [...] there is not only South Africa with the tragedy of apartheid, [...] there is also [...] the need for a more real unity amongst peoples and souls, together with a strong warning [...] not to make the same mistakes that have already been made in other African*

*countries."*

[R 236]

(*Carminé di Biase in L'Osservatore Romano on Nadine Gordimer's Something Out There*).

As one might have predicted, moving on to the Catholic press has meant identifying a different way of representing and domesticating the work and author. There no longer seems to be any emphasis on the literary dimension of the work. Meanwhile, any reference to 'oppression' or 'struggle' seems to have been replaced by a reference to apartheid described as a 'tragedy'. The word 'tragedy' seems to be the dominant word in this review.

Perhaps, one of the most important aspects of this kind of representation is the stress on the universality of the themes dealt with by the author. In this particular case, Nadine Gordimer's soul (as a writer), the *animus*, is seen as open to 'universal dimensions', in the sense that it shows the 'tragedy of brothers against brothers'.

If one compares the reviews so far analysed, as far as the references to South Africa are concerned, one notices that in some reviews the words 'oppressors' and 'oppressed' are used. Other reviews, instead, would tend to talk of 'Blacks and Whites'. In the last review analysed, finally, one can find the word 'brothers'.

In R 236, the emphasis on struggle appears to have been replaced by the idea of 'a unity of peoples and souls'. The words used in this review therefore confirm that the point of view adopted is strictly Catholic.

## Conclusion

Having thus dealt with all the reviews of Nadine Gordimer's book Something Out There, one should try to provide an answer to the two questions that represent the basis of the present chapter.

As far as Question One is concerned (ie are there any typical ways of representing/introducing White South African literature?), although a clearer picture will only emerge after the analysis of J. M. Coetzee's reviews, one might perhaps venture so far as to say that White South African literature tends to be introduced by means of two main domestication/familiarization devices:

- 1) political references  
(apartheid, struggle, colonialism, unity of brothers etc.)
- 2) literary references  
(Nobel Prize, literary traditions, author's personal style etc.)

Question Two asked whether the paper's ideological stances are always manifest and therefore predictable in the reviews. Again, on the basis of the reviews so far analysed, one can say that newspaper reviewing tends to be characterized by a certain degree of predictability and by a recurring presence of ideological references.

In particular, with the exception of La Stampa and La Vanguardia, whose literary magazines do not necessarily mirror the newspaper's conservative stance, left-wing papers tend to emphasize the political dimension of books

and authors. As one moves to the centre, a double and parallel set of references to both the political and the literary aspects of books begins to emerge. Finally, if one moves further to the right, the literary/artistic analysis of a book seems to dominate.

In parallel with the changes described above, the vocabulary of political reference seems to undergo a similar change. In fact, although the word 'apartheid' is used in all reviews, words such as 'struggle', 'oppression' or 'neocolonization', tend to be replaced by comparatively 'weaker' words or simply tend to become less frequent. The vocabulary seems to change altogether in the Catholic press, where a 'struggle' becomes a 'tragedy' and, at least as far as these reviews are concerned, 'oppressors' and 'oppressed' are referred to as 'brothers'.

b) John Michael Coetzee

The other White South African writer dealt with in this chapter is J. M. Coetzee.

As was mentioned before, no reviews of J. M. Coetzee's books have been found in the left-wing papers analysed. Perhaps, one could suggest that the fact that J. M. Coetzee never really converted to strictly realistic literature has not made him particularly welcome to a certain type of left-wing press.

The first extract, dealing with The Life and Times of Michel K., is taken from The Guardian.

*"A novel about the dispossessed"*

[...]

*"We know the end of such journeys in literature as in life: nothing much good can come to him"*

[...]

*"Another despair saga, another dead-end safari of the modern picaresque"*

[R 250]

*(Norman Shrapnel in The Guardian on J. M. Coetzee's The Life and Times of Michael K.).*

The book is introduced mainly on the basis of its literary character: 'a book about ...', 'we know the end of such journeys in literature', 'another dead-end safari of the modern picaresque'. These phrases show that the representation is focussed on the plot and the themes of the book.

There is no direct reference to apartheid. However, this

might be due to the fact that this is a very short review. It is part of the 'New fiction' section of the literary pages. Technically, the review belongs to the group of articles that do not usually exceed 120-140 words.

One might argue that the word 'dispossessed' is enough to point to apartheid, however, the fact remains that the word 'apartheid' itself is not used. On the other hand, this might be interpreted as a deliberate step taken by the reviewer, perhaps resulting from the fact that Coetzee is a more 'intellectual' writer (in the sense that he often writes in a comparatively 'sophisticated' way that allows more levels of interpretation) at least in comparison with Nadine Gordimer, whose writing - loaded with direct references to apartheid and the situation in South Africa - is often regarded as a blending of fiction and documentary.

By contrast, in J. M. Coetzee's books, references to South Africa and apartheid tend to be hidden inside or behind the plot, as the following extract (taken from Le Monde) points out.

*"John Michael Coetzee n'est pas un romancier sudafricain comme les autres. Contrairement à nombre de ses contemporains, il n'a jamais sacrifié au rite du réalisme, de la fresque en noir et blanc, avec toutes les naïvetés que cela peut laisser supposer"*

[...]

*"Une fois de plus, Coetzee effectue un tour de passe-passe. On s'attendait à un roman bien ancré dans la réalité sudafricaine, et il nous offre une parabole pour le moins étonnante"*

[R 226]

*"John Michael Coetzee is not a South African novelist like the others. Unlike many of his contemporaries, he has never made any concessions to realism, to black and white frescoes, with all the naïveté that this*

implies"

[...]

"Once again, Coetzee surprises us with one of his conjuring-tricks. We expected a novel deeply rooted in the South African reality and what he gives us instead is an altogether stunning parable"

[R 226]

(Bernard Génès in Le Monde on J M Coetzee's The Life and Times of Michael K.).

In this review, although South Africa is mentioned a couple of times, the domestication gives priority to literary references (a 'novelist', 'concessions to realism'). However, this is most probably due to the fact that J M Coetzee, as was mentioned before, may be regarded as one of the most 'intellectual' authors. The next review is taken from the Spanish El País.

"Coetzee parece compartir la posición de escritores como otra surafricana blanca, Nadine Gordimer, que prefiere denunciar el apartheid desde la literatura"

[...]

"Como la mayoría de los escritores surafricanos anglófonos, John Michael Coetzee cultiva un clasicismo que configura uno de los más curiosos reductos del idioma. La transparencia que vincula la palabra y su objeto, definitivamente perdida en el último fin de siglo, vuelve a despuntar, anacrónica y en cierto modo fascinante"

[R 118]

"Coetzee seems to share the view of another White South African writer, Nadine Gordimer, who prefers to attack apartheid by means of literature"

[...]

"Like the majority of South African writers of English expression, John Michael Coetzee has adopted a kind of classicism which represents one of the most striking aspects of the language. The transparency that links

*words with objects, lost for ever at the end of the XIX century, turns up again, anachronistic and yet somehow fascinating"*

[R 118]

*(Encarna Castejón in El País on J. M. Coetzee's The Life and Times of Michael K.).*

Unlike the previous reviews, in this one the representation is performed by means of both political and literary references. This technique, so far, seems to be the most common way of introducing White South African authors.

The following extract is also taken from El País, from an article not entirely devoted to J. M. Coetzee but to a general introduction to African literature. It was written in 1986, the year that marks the beginning of the interest in African literature in Spain (at least as far as newspaper reviewing is concerned). The Nobel Prize had just been awarded to Wole Soyinka when this article appeared.

*"Plantearse hoy escribir en África - en el ámbito anglófono - es en primer lugar una cuestión de piel: los Soyinka y los Achebe lo proclaman, [...] y la postura radical del kenyata Ngugi Wa Thiong'o. Quizá por eso tenga sentido hablar de narrativa africana blanca, conscientes de todo tipo de reservas, de todo tipo de precauciones frente a una generalización excesiva que siempre encubre amplios grados de distorsión y que plantea cuestiones polémicas de identidad lingüística enfrentada a una supuesta identidad cultural o nacional"*

[...]

*"'Michael K.', la mejor novela del más intelectual de los novelistas africanos"*

[...]

*"'Michael K.' es un Kafka africano que abrumba en su fisicalidad al lector europeo"*



[R 207]

*"Being a writer in Africa today - in the English-speaking part of Africa - is first of all a matter of skin: Wole Soyinka and Chinua Achebe stress it, and so does the Kenyan writer Ngugi Wa Thiong'o from his radical position. Perhaps, speaking of White African literature makes sense, although one has to be careful and aware that such generalizations always imply a certain degree of distortion, besides raising questions about linguistic identity in relation to cultural or national identity" [...]*

*"'The Life and Times of Michael K.' is the best novel by the most intellectual African novelist" [...]*

*"Michael K. is an African Kafka capable of embarrassing European readers with his own physicality"*

[R 207]

*(Maria Lozano in El País on African literature.)*

In the above extracts, J. M. Coetzee is introduced in a completely different way. There is no longer any marked difference between literary and political references. Both types of reference are blended in a kind of wider or encompassing reference that might perhaps be defined as 'cultural'.

In this review one can feel that an entirely new subject or discourse is being introduced to Spanish readers. The critic appears to have decided to introduce a selection of key elements or aspects of the new subject: the linguistic debate, African literature and identity, White African and Black African writing etc.

Moreover, the reviewer is also providing a kind of warning (or guideline) against the dangers of generalizations in such a sensitive field as African literature.

Subsequently, the reviewer moves on to introduce a selection of the most important African writers (and J. M. Coetzee is amongst them). In the case of J. M. Coetzee, perhaps due to the author's character, the references tend to become mostly literary (the reference to Kafka, in the parallel between Michael K. and Kafka, for instance, maybe seen as a domestication device).

However, if the distinctly literary introduction of J. M. Coetzee is analysed in the context of the whole article, its character changes altogether.

This comprehensive, 'cultural' way of introducing a writer in the wider context of African literature may be regarded as a domestication process that resorts to the use of guidelines ('warnings', as in the case of the above article), aimed at helping the reader to contextualize the new author or book.

This approach may be defined as 'cultural' in the sense that the author or book in question tend to be introduced as part of a wider discourse, as a 'new' field, or simply as a subject that is supposed to be culturally 'other' to the reader.

At this stage one could perhaps predict that this kind of 'cultural' approach will be likely to become more common in the case of the introduction of Black African writers due to the fact that - in comparison with White South African authors - the authors' cultural background is likely to be more distant (ie 'other') for European readers.

The following review is taken from La Stampa. A look at its title may be of interest:

*'Un Robinson postmoderno scende nell'inferno del Sudafrica'*

[R 212]

*'A post-modern Robinson descends into the South African inferno'*

[R 212]

The following extracts are taken from the same review.

*"Una copertina dalle tinte violente [...] che andrebbe bene per un libro di Wilbur Smith è la veste ingannevole che l'editore Rizzoli ha dato all'ultimo bellissimo libro del sudafricano John Michael Coetzee [The Life and Times of Michael K.] tradendo non solo lo spirito ma anche la lettera del romanzo"*

[...]

*"La sua odissea è quella paradigmatica del nero sudafricano"*

[R 212]

*"The book cover, with its violent colours, would suit a book by Wilbur Smith. It is the deceitful cover the publisher Rizzoli has chosen for John Michel Coetzee's latest novel. Such a cover betrays both the book and its 'spirit'"*

[...]

*"His [ie Michael K.'s] odyssey is that of Black South Africans"*

[R 212]

*(Itala Vivan in La Stampa on J M Coetzee's The Life and Times of Michael K.).*

In this review, the introduction is predominantly literary, although the article, as will be pointed out, includes some references to the political situation in South Africa. The familiarization takes place by means of both literary and political references. The 'struggle' or 'oppression', in the literary introduction, is referred to as an 'odyssey'. Other literary references include Robinson Crusoe, postmodernism, Dante's Inferno,

Homer's *Odyssey*, Kafka and Caliban. The title itself is a very dense combination of literary references.

The vocabulary, however, suddenly changes altogether in the paragraph devoted to the political introduction. One of the references, for instance, deals with "the White government's *relocation* and *resettlement* [in italics and English in the original] of Black people".

[R 212]

The reviewer at this point goes so far as to accuse the translator of having mistranslated the two words (*relocation* and *resettlement*) with the word 'colonization'.

However, only one paragraph in the whole review has a distinctly political approach. The remaining paragraphs have a strong literary flavour. Therefore, the whole review may be regarded as yet another example of a domestication technique mainly based on literary references.

The last review of J M Coetzee is taken from the right-wing newspaper ABC.

*"En las páginas finales el autor interpreta para el lector en pocos párrafos el significado de lo leído [...]: el ansia oscura del individuo protagonista, que no quiere, ; no puede! someterse al sistema"*

[...]

*"Dada la indudable buena pluma de John Michael Coetzee veremos en breve sus libros aupados al olímpico escaparate de lo que debe, con urgencia, ser leído"*

[R 110]

*"In the last pages, the author interprets for the reader in a few paragraphs the meaning of the book [...]: the anxiety of the main character who does not want to, he cannot in fact, submit to the system"*

[...]

*"Given his undoubtedly good literary qualities, we will soon find his books piled up in bookshop windows, those piles representing what we urgently need to read"*

[R 110]

*(Pedro Antonio Urbina in ABC on J. M. Coetzee's The Life and Times of Michael K.).*

Almost predictably, moving to the right, the political references appear to have become less frequent and to have been replaced by literary ones (with stress on the plot, the character and his anxiety).

### Conclusion

As far as the two main questions are concerned, this analysis of J M Coetzee's reviews confirms the fact that there are two main ways of introducing a White South African writer.

The domestication process may be based on either political or literary references, though in reality a blend of both, in which one of the approaches tends to dominate, is often found.

In this analysis of J M Coetzee's reviews, a third domestication technique has been encountered. It has been defined as a 'cultural' approach. This type of domestication is characterized by the fact that the review not only deals with the author but also tries to contextualize him or his books much further, perhaps going as far as <sup>to</sup> introduce African literature as a whole. The review in question, R 207, was loaded with references to what the critic regards as delicate 'cultural' matters, such as the problem of languages in African literature, the identity of writers etc.

R 207 ( Maria Lozano in El País) was aimed at introducing African literature to Spanish readers. Significantly, it was written in 1986, the year when Wole Soyinka was awarded the Nobel Prize, whose effects were obviously being felt in Spain as in any other European country.

One can perhaps predict that this type of approach, the 'cultural' approach, will be adopted increasingly frequently in the case of culturally more distant (and therefore 'other') authors such as Black African authors are expected to be, at least in comparison with White South Africans or even North Africans.

## SECTION TWO: BLACK AFRICAN LITERATURE

### a) Wole Soyinka

Wole Soyinka is reviewed in a wide variety of newspapers. The first review is taken from the Italian left-wing daily Il Manifesto.

*"La guerra civile nigeriana, o guerra del Biafra, è l'evento più tragico e traumatico nella breve storia della Nigeria indipendente"*

[...]

*"La Jaca pubblica 'The Man Died: Prison Notes', [...] che diviene misteriosamente in Italiano 'L'uomo è morto: romanzo', probabilmente nel tentativo di rendere più appetibile al pubblico un'opera così amara e complessa"*

[...]

*"il caratteristico senso dell'umorismo di Soyinka pervade quasi tutta l'opera"*

[...]

*"il gusto per l'iperbole e l'amplificazione retorica, espedienti [...] caratteristici dell'umorismo yoruba, si possono ritrovare nelle splendide descrizioni[...]"*

[R 176]

*"The Nigerian civil war, or Biafran war, is the most tragic and traumatic event in the brief history of independent Nigeria"*

[...]

*"[The publishing house] Jaca have published 'The Man*



*Died: Prison Notes', which, mysteriously, becomes 'The Man Died: a novel' in Italian, perhaps in an attempt to turn such a bitter and complex work into a more palatable book"*

*[...]*

*"Soyinka's characteristic sense of humour informs the whole book"*

*[...]*

*"Hyperbole and rhetorical amplification are typical devices used in Yoruba humour: they can be seen in the description of [...]"*

*[R 176]*

*(Cristiana Pugliese in Il Manifesto on Wole Soyinka's The Man Died).*

As was suggested in the previous section, in the case of Black African writers, political/historical and literary references tend to become blended in a wider and more comprehensive kind of domestication that appears to be made necessary by the cultural 'otherness' of the author.

Such a 'comprehensive' introduction may be regarded as resulting from a reviewer's conscious decision and effort to provide readers with more background information, a decision prompted by the reviewer's awareness of the danger of misinterpretation.

This is what was previously defined as the 'cultural' approach, characterized by the presence of guidelines aimed at bridging the gap assumed to exist between the reader (and his own cultural background) and the author (and his culture).

In R 176 one may detect political/historical references (to the Biafran War) as well as references to Soyinka's writing style (his sense of humour), but also to the Yoruba culture (the use of 'hyperbole and rhetorical amplification').

If guidelines had not been provided, the latter aspect in particular might have been misinterpreted or not interpreted at all by European readers (Italians in this case) who might have approached Soyinka's book equipped with some kind of expectations deriving from their familiarity with a certain kind of European prison writing (Antonio Gramsci etc.).

The next extract is taken from El País.

*"Uno de los mayores dramaturgos africanos y un gran novelista. Pero eso no es lo más importante aquí. Queremos decir que, pese a la estructura, el lenguaje y el resultado alcanzados por el escritor, la obra pertenece a esa, por desgracia, numerosa producción histórico-literaria que son las memorias de presos políticos"*

[R 168]

*"[Wole Soyinka is] one of the best African playwrights and a very good novelist. However, this is not the most important thing here. What we mean is that, in spite of its structure, in spite of the language and the results achieved by the writer, this book belongs to that unfortunately long tradition of political prisoners' diaries"*

[R 168]

(C. A. Caranci in El País on Wole Soyinka's The Man Died).

The above representation may be regarded as an attempt to provide a domestication of 'otherness' in the sense that the reader is being offered some guidelines that will or should allow him to contextualize and thus interpret the book in question 'correctly' (at least according to the reviewer).

In R 168 the book is only being defined as belonging to a literary tradition (prison diaries), whereas in in the reviewer's view, any references to the Yoruba are less important.

At this point, a comparison between the first two reviews analysed, R 168 and R 176, points to the fact that the approach adopted by the critic in R 176 may perhaps be regarded as a more comprehensive one. The main difference between the two reviews is that R 176 seems to take much more into account the likelihood of miscontextualization and, consequently, misinterpretation by the reader. It is on the basis of this consideration that R 176 might be regarded as an example of a 'cultural' approach.

The following review is taken from the Barcelona newspaper La Vanguardia.

*"Es una obra 'militante'" [followed by references to Antonio Gramsci and Jean-Paul Sartre]*

*[...]*

*"Lo malo es que este libro nos llega tarde y procede de otro mundo caracterizado por su impenetrabilidad. Europa ha dejado muy atrás la literatura de combate, en lo que todos los valores estrictamente literarios se subordinan a los objetivos políticos y sociales que se desean alcanzar. Y desgraciadamente el continente africano, con su vieja cultura, su costoso proceso de adaptación y su atmósfera opresiva, [...] es un enigma de difícil acceso para la sensibilidad europea"*

*[R 159]*

*"[The Man Died] is a 'militant/committed' work" [references to Antonio Gramsci and Jean-Paul Sartre]*

*[...]*

*"The thing is that this book reaches us late and comes from an impenetrable world. Europe has left this kind of literature behind, a kind of writing in which strictly*

*literary values are less important than the political and social objectives desired. Unfortunately, the African continent, with its old culture, its expensive process of adaptation to modern life and its oppressive atmosphere, is an enigma of difficult access for Europeans"*

[R 159]

*(Robert Saladrigas in La Vanguardia on Wole Soyinka's The Man Died).*

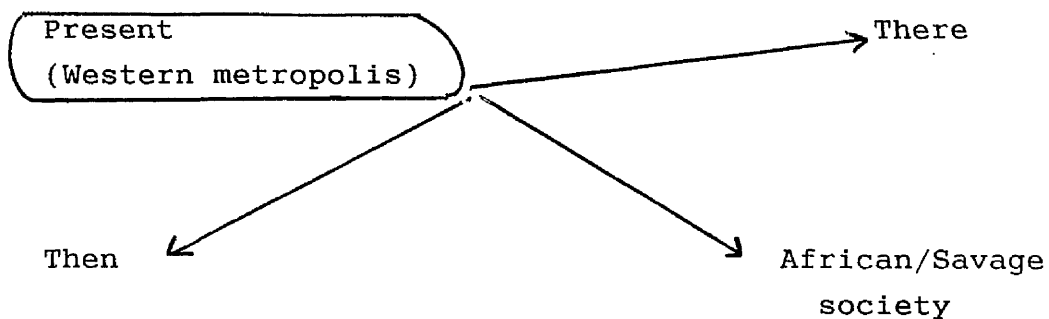
This review is rather significant because it almost denies the value of a cultural approach. The representation includes some literary references (to Jean Paul Sartre's notion of 'commitment'/'engagement' and to Antonio Gramsci's 'Quaderni dal carcere' with whom European readers are supposed to be familiar).

However, subsequently, the review somehow annihilates the effect of the literary references by explaining or perhaps warning readers that the African continent is an 'enigma of difficult access for Europeans'. Africa is portrayed by means of a set of frozen images, based on generalizations: 'old culture', 'difficult process of adaptation', 'oppressive atmosphere'.

Moreover, the use of an expression such as 'the African continent' conveys the idea of Africa as a uniform geographic area. It may be regarded in opposition to an image of Africa as a geographic reality made up of a series of local situations such as Nigeria, Biafra, etc., such as in the case of R 176.

The concepts of 'ancient culture' and 'oppressive atmosphere' are both dangerous images in the sense that they provide a stereotyped representation of something that is doomed never to change. These images may be regarded as distancing devices that are capable of preventing the reader from bridging the gap assumed to exist between Wole Soyinka and the European reader.

This approach to Africa may be regarded on the basis of Johannes Fabian's theory of representation of otherness (referred to in the introduction to the present chapter). Fabian's theory is illustrated by a figure that shows a system of coordinates emanating from a centre. In that centre, which represents the present of the Western metropolis, societies of all times and places may be interpreted in terms of relative distance from the present of the Western metropolis:



The whole representation of Africa in R 159 is built upon the opposition West vs Africa or 'here/we' vs 'there/they'.

Firstly, the Western metropolis is represented as 'modern' or as having successfully undergone an adaptation process to modernity. Africa, on the other hand, is still undergoing an expensive adaptation to modernity.

Secondly, the West is liberated, whereas Africa is oppressed.

Finally, the West is rational and comprehensible, as opposed to Africa which is an enigma.

This kind of representation, paradoxically, tries to domesticate 'otherness' by means of comparatively

distancing devices. It represents an alternative to the 'cultural' approach. However, both representations - at least in the reviewers' intentions - aim at providing the reader with the instruments (ie the background information) aimed at allowing him to decode the book coming from another culture.

The previous extract might be compared with the following example, taken from La Stampa.

*"[referring to Wole Soyinka's plays] sbarazzano il luogo comune tra il paternalistico e l'assistenziale del mito della negritudine, elargito nel secondo dopoguerra dall'intelligenza europea, specie francese, la retorica equivoca del terzomondismo"*

[...]

*"A settembre, quando i testi del volume saranno portati in scena da noi"*

[...]

*"Nello stesso periodo, il congresso organizzato a Roma [...] sulle letterature dell'Africa nera dovrà confermare la serietà dell'interesse crescente per la cultura africana"*

[...]

*[Wole Soyinka's interview] "la letteratura africana è una grande realtà ad onta delle sue antinomie e delle sue tensioni. Bisogna saper leggere, e liberarsi di un'ottica troppo risolutamente europea"*

[R 174]

*"[His plays] destroy the paternalistic and 'welfarist' commonplace of the myth of negritude, created after the war by European intellectuals, French in particular, [they also destroy] the ambiguous rhetoric of Third-Worldism"*

[...]

*"In September his plays will be staged in Italy"*

[...]

*"At the same time, the conference on African literature,*

organized in Rome [...]should confirm the growing interest in African culture"

[...]

"[Wole Soyinka's interview] African literature is a big reality, in spite of its tensions and antinomies. One [reference to European readers] has to learn how to read it by getting rid of a too strictly Eurocentric viewpoint"

[R 174]

(Claudio Gorlier in La Stampa on Wole Soyinka's The Man Died).

The above review may be regarded as the opposite of R 159 as far as the domestication technique is concerned. Moreover, it provides one with a significant example of the 'cultural' approach. This approach, as the two reviews R 174 and R 176 have so far illustrated, consists of two main levels of action:

- one in which the assumed gap between the two cultures is bridged;

- one in which commonplaces and existing distortions are exposed and dismantled while new awareness is created, a kind of awareness that (in the reviewer's intention) aims at allowing the reader to decode the book without distortions.

The commonplaces that are exposed and attacked are those linked with or produced by the 'ambiguous rhetoric of Third-Worldism' and the 'too strictly Eurocentric approaches'

R 174 would thus allow one to further investigate the nature of what has been so far regarded as a 'cultural' approach in the representation of 'otherness'. It now seems clear that such an approach is based on the rejection of what reviewers perceive as the ambiguous rhetoric of Third-Worldism and Euro(ethno)-centrism.

The following extracts are taken from the right-wing newspaper ABC.

*"Nos encontramos ante un lacerante testimonio de la barbarie y el escarnio de todos los derechos humanos"*  
[...]

*"una precisa potencia de estilo e imaginación [...] acumula representaciones y percepciones del horror"*  
[...]

*"Este poder de transfiguración asienta la verdad profunda del libro, su condición de obra de arte"*  
[R 154]

*"The book is a painful witness of cruelty and the humiliation of human rights"*  
[...]

*"powerful style and imagery [...] in which representations and perceptions of horror follow one another"*  
[...]

*"this power of transfiguration represents the deep truth of the book, its condition of work of art"*  
[R 154]

(M. García-Posada in ABC on Wole Soyinka's The Man Died).

In this case, the approach is strictly literary, whereas all political implications are diverted towards or transformed into 'universal' generalizations. This is not too distant from what has already been pointed out in Section One of the present chapter, in the case of a review taken from the Catholic newspaper L'Osservatore Romano, [R 236].

In R 154 the book is regarded mainly as 'a work of art', as a carrier of a certain message which is supposed to have a kind of universal appeal. Perhaps this approach may be



regarded as a type of domestication that does not help to bridge the gap of otherness. In fact, as was pointed out in the analysis of R 236, generalizations, and the use of the adjective 'universal' in particular, may be regarded as distancing devices in reviewing.

One might perhaps argue that the adjective 'universal' implies closeness rather than distance. However, it refers to a generalization or generality of closeness, regarded in its most open, vague and ambiguous meaning. It lacks contextualization.

The last reviews are taken from the Catholic L'Osservatore Romano. The book in question, in R 169, is 'The Man Died' by Wole Soyinka. Once again, the literary value of the book is emphasised and the only guidelines provided regard the genre of the book.

*"una lettura che poi, pagina dopo pagina, si attende che decolli ma [...] non decolla mai"*

[...]

*"Il lettore non propriamente interessato al documento politico, alla testimonianza storica, procede con fatica e si chiede perché chiamare [...] romanzo un'opera che è il diario delle vicende personali di Soyinka"*

[R 169]

*"A reading that never really takes off, although one waits, page after page, for it to take off"*

[...]

*"The reader who is not particularly interested in the political document or the historical witness, finds the reading quite hard and wonders why they called this book a novel when, in fact, it is a diary"*

[R 169]

*(Nicoletta Pietravalle in L'Osservatore Romano on Wole Soyinka's The Man Died).*

However, it is R 172, still taken from L'Osservatore

Romano that appears particularly significant at this point.

*"Due drammi, fin qui, mi avevano fatto sentire il fascino aspro e selvaggio di una negritudine. [...] Ma erano opere scritte da bianchi: 'Emperor Jones' (1920) dello statunitense O'Neill e 'Les nègres' (1959) del francese Genet. Non so che cosa Soyinka pensi di questi due testi. A me [...] paiono opere robuste, con accensioni poetiche e drammatiche straordinarie. Mi chiesi più volte quando la stessa Africa avrebbe inventato un teatro così 'suo' [...] Ma credo che Soyinka questa lacuna l'abbia colmata"*

*[...]*

*"Il tono generale è strettamente unitario. L'africanità prevale in pieno sull'europeismo, si direbbe che lo inghiotte e lo assimila come un pitone un coniglio. L'opera nel suo complesso ha il colore acceso e visionario della foresta e della danza rituale"*

*[...]*

*"Qui la foresta, il tamburo, l'immolazione rituale, il parlare per proverbi o per enigmi [...] sono davvero [...] i naturali interlocutori del mitra e del camion, della radio e della Coca-cola. Ma ciò varrebbe anche per altri autori africani. Soyinka ci mette qualcosa di più, qualcosa di tutto e soltanto suo: come sempre hanno fatto tutti coloro che abbiamo definito poeti"*

*[R 172]*

*"Two plays, so far, made me feel the wild charm of negritude [...]. However, they had been written by Whites: 'Emperor Jones' (1920) by the American O'Neil and 'Les nègres' (1959) by the French writer Genet. I do not know what Soyinka might think of these two texts. To me, however, they seem to be powerful works, with an extraordinary poetic and dramatic insight. I wondered several times whether Africa would ever invent its 'own' theatre. [...] Now, I feel as if Soyinka had bridged that gap"*

[...]

"The overall tone is strictly homogeneous. Africanism undoubtedly prevails over Europeanism. One could say that Africanism swallows Europeanism like a python does with a rabbit. Taken as a whole, the work has the vivid and visionary colour of forests and ritual dances"

[...]

"Here, forests, tam-tam, ritual sacrifices, a way of speaking by means of proverbs and riddles [...] are the natural interlocutors of machine-guns, lorries, radios and Coca-cola. Of course this could apply to other African writers as well. Soyinka, however, does something more, he adds something special: as it has always been done by those defined as poets"

[R 172]

(Italo A. Chiusano in L'Osservatore Romano on Wole Soyinka).

This review provides one with an example of a representation that does not resort to a 'cultural' domestication approach. Otherness in this case is treated as what could be regarded as 'exotic otherness'.

The reviewer seems to be (and to have always been) looking for a kind of Africanism (as opposed to Europeanism) that is made up of frozen stereotyped images such as forests, ritual dances, ritual sacrifices, tam-tam, machine-guns, lorries, Coca-cola.

Once again, Africa is represented by means of generalizations and, above all, as one big uniform continent instead of many local realities and cultures.

Perhaps, this approach may be defined the 'exotic approach', one that does not appear either to generate awareness or to bridge the gap between the different cultures. Otherness is domesticated by means of frozen,

stereotype images, likely to be found in tourist brochures.

Images such as forests, tam-tams etc. in the end, would seem to act as distancing devices in the sense that the 'other' culture remains 'other'. It has simply been reduced (ie domesticated/familiarized) to a limited number of set images and concepts that, due to the fact that they are frozen, deny all possibility of coevalness between the two cultures, one of which remains dominant.

If one refers back to Johannes Fabian's figure, the above review can be represented in a schematic way as a series of oppositions between the Western metropolis and primitive Africa.

Once again, two sets of references may be singled out. They emphasize the difference between the Western metropolis and Africa. The civilized West is almost compared to a (rational/tame/innocent) 'rabbit' that is being swallowed by an (irrational/nasty) 'python' in a scene of dramatic beauty. Africa is depicted by means of classic 'heart of darkness' images, (vividness, forests, tam-tams, ritual sacrifices), aimed at conveying the 'wild charm of negritude'.

Moreover, Africa is described as having (at long last) successfully been able to bridge a gap represented by its lack of a dramatic tradition. Significantly, it is almost taken for granted that it is Africa that has to bridge the gap, ie to become civilized, and not the other way round.

### Conclusion

Having thus analysed the first Black African writer, one can perhaps refer back to the two main questions. On the basis of the reviews so far analysed, one seems to be in a position to say that a difference exists between White South African and Black African literature so far as domestication techniques and representation as a whole are concerned.

In the case of White South African authors the approach was mainly based on political and/or literary references, whereas in the case of Black Subsaharan writers, the element of 'otherness', due to cultural distance, becomes more relevant and therefore seems to require a kind of more comprehensive or 'cultural' approach.

This does not mean that political or literary references have been abandoned. In fact, they still represent an important part of the 'cultural' approach.

As a whole, the 'cultural' approach aims at bridging the gap of otherness by means of creating awareness amongst the readers, by providing guidelines, background information and, most importantly, by dismantling what the reviewer regards as commonplaces and Euro-centered expectations.

However, next to this kind of approach, there is another one. It may be referred to as the 'exotic other' approach

and it consists in ignoring, if not denying, the possibility of bridging the gap and therefore explaining otherness by means of 'exotic', frozen, stereotype images, generalizations and oversimplifications. All of these, ultimately, act as distancing devices in the sense that they deny any coevalness between the two cultures.

As far as Question Two is concerned, the same trends identified in the case of White South African literature seem to apply to Black African literature as well. Literary references tend to replace political references as one moves from left-wing towards right-wing and Catholic reviews.

b) Amos Tutuola

The next Subsaharan writer is Amos Tutuola. The reviews of his books will be analysed in an attempt to demonstrate a wider validity for the trends identified in the section dealing with Wole Soyinka.

The first review is taken from the left-wing paper Il Manifesto. The article is followed by a short story by Amos Tutuola.

*"(nella lingua yoruba 'baleno' significa 'minuto')"*  
[reviewer's note].

[...]

*"Tutte le storie si ispirano ai racconti popolari yoruba"*

[...]

*"Lo stile della narrazione è essenzialmente orale e l'uso della prima persona dona grande spontaneità"*

[...]

*"continue ripetizioni che hanno la funzione di scandire la successione degli eventi e tenere vivo l'interesse del pubblico"*

[...]

*"La struttura delle opere di Tutuola è quella del racconto tradizionale, partenza, iniziazione, ritorno"*

[R 281]

*"(In the Yoruba language 'baleno' means 'minute')"*  
[reviewer's note]

[...]

*"All his stories are inspired by Yoruba popular tales"*

[...]

*"The style of the narration is essentially oral and the*

*use of the first person singular pronoun gives it great spontaneity"*

*[...]*

*"The continuous repetitions aim at pointing out the succession of events while keeping the reader's attention alive"*

*[...]*

*"The structure of Tutuola's works is that of a traditional tale: departure, initiation, return"*

*[R 281]*

*(Cristiana Pugliese in Il Manifesto on Amos Tutuola).*

R 281 may be regarded as another example of a 'cultural' representation. In this particular case, given the essentially artistic/literary and non-political (at least in comparison with books such as Matigari or The Man Died for instance) nature of Amos Tutuola's writing, there appear to be no political references.

The above representation tries to bridge the cultural gap of otherness existing between the European reader and the Nigerian story, mainly by means of providing background information, explanations and translator's notes.

An example of a translator's note may be found when the reviewer (who, incidentally, in this case also acts as a translator) explains that the meaning of the word 'baleno' in Yoruba is 'minute' and not 'flash', which is what 'baleno' most often means in Italian.

Likewise, the background information about the use of the first person singular pronoun, as well as the meaning of repetitions and the plot structure are aimed at helping the reader decode and interpret the book without necessarily applying a too strictly Eurocentric perspective.

Moreover, R 281 does not contain any concessions whatsoever to exoticism. In fact, one could not find any



images of forests or tam-tams in this review. In other words, in R 281 the reviewer has not resorted to any frozen images of Africa.

The same author is reviewed by The Guardian. The review is part of a longer 'new fiction' article. In this case, the size of the review does not allow the reviewer to be 'reader-friendly' to the same extent as in the previous example. The author and his work, as the following extract shows, are introduced by means of a reference to a 'personal myth'.

*"Few authors of our time, of any time, have projected their own voice strongly enough to establish the language of a personal myth. Amos Tutuola did it three decades ago when The Palm-Wine Drinkard magically lurched on to the world stage, telling tall stories straight from the Nigerian tribal well-springs but shaping them into a wonderful preposterous one-man idiom" [the words 'magically' and 'tribal' have been transcribed in italics for the purpose of this research]*

[R 141]

*(Norman Shrapnel in The Guardian on Amos Tutuola's Pauper, Brawler and Slanderer).*

The whole review consists of 104 words. Therefore, one should not be surprised at the concentration of information that the reviewer has tried to provide in one single paragraph.

A comparison between the first two reviews analysed would point to the fact that R 141 is less 'reader-friendly' than R 281, in the sense that the reader is provided with less background information aimed at helping him bridge the presumed gap of otherness.

Moreover, in R 141 the reader is not offered any information as to the culture where the book comes from. (In the case of R 141, the reviewer may have obviously

taken for granted the fact that Amos Tutuola is supposed to be already well-known in a country where his first book appeared over thirty years previously).

The following review, taken from La Stampa, allows one, once again, to point to the fact that the Turin newspaper, though coming from a politically conservative area, has managed to keep a traditional openness or freedom as far as literary reviewing is concerned.

R 29 deals with Amos Tutuola amongst other African writers.

*"realistica e mitica, allegorica e favolistica, la narrativa africana occupa [...] un territorio geografico e letterario di considerevole ampiezza. Essa richiede al lettore un impegno a non filtrarla per mezzo dei suoi parametri, a esorcizzare la tentazione del primitivo"*  
[R 29]

*"African writing, realistic and mythical, allegoric and fabulous, is set in a considerably wide geographical and literary area. It demands from its readers an effort not to interpret it on the basis of their own parameters as well as an effort to exorcise/ignore the temptation of primitivism"*  
[R 29]

*(Claudio Gorlier in La Stampa on Amos Tutuola's Pauper, Brawler and Slanderer).*

This brief extract should suffice to explain what the aim of a 'cultural' representation is: warning readers against the danger of misinterpreting the 'otherness' of African literature. In particular, it points to what appears to be the main enemy in the interpretation: 'the temptation of primitivism'.

'Primitivism' thus becomes the main characteristic of

the 'exotic other' approach, an approach that tends to oversimplify and generalize by means of frozen images.

The following review is taken from a right-wing newspaper: The Daily Telegraph.

*"The blend of the fantastic and the everyday in Amos Tutuola's Pauper, Brawler and Slanderer is on the level of folk-tale or the peasant pictures of Brueghel"*

[R 136]

(K. McL. in The Daily Telegraph on Amos Tutuola's Pauper, Brawler and Slanderer).

The extract is part of review of 'new fiction' and, again, the reviewer only has a very limited space in which to review Amos Tutuola. Consequently, he tries to concentrate as much information as he possibly can in a few sentences.

The fact that Amos Tutuola's tales are somehow put on the same level as 'the peasant pictures of Brueghel' contains a significant reference. By means of comparing a tale to a painting, the reviewer is (whether deliberately or not) freezing the tale, domesticating but also distancing it at the same time, in the sense that he is denying the coevalness of the two cultures (the reader's and the author's). This is done mainly by avoiding any stress on the fact that the Yoruba culture is still very much alive and that the folk-tales in question are far from being representative of Africa as a whole.

In other words, a comparison between this review and any of the reviews that adopt the 'cultural' approach would show that R 136 is characterized by a very limited contextualization of the book.

In the case of R 136, perhaps such a freezing operation may appear partly justified by the fact that Amos Tutuola's stories are deeply rooted in Yoruba mythology

and folk-tales. However, the fact remains that such a freezing operation is a dangerous one - mainly because it leads to a denial of coevalness between the two cultures - in the field of African literature.

The last extract is taken from The Sunday Telegraph. It may be regarded as yet another example of a purely literary introduction in which cultural otherness is explained on the basis of references to Western literature. No guidelines or background information on the Yoruba culture are therefore available for the reader.

*"The Palm-Wine Drinkard, so eloquently praised by Dylan Thomas. [...] His magical English style is still unspoiled, unimproved"*

*[...]*

*"He writes in the way some Nigerians talk: it is the colloquial language of the early school-leaver - lucid, experimental, poetic and incorrect. Artfully artless, he seizes on attractive English words to express untranslatable African ideas"*

*[...]*

*"We may be reminded of Rebecca West's bleak saying 'all good fiction comes down to the study of original sin, of our inherent disposition to choose death when we ought to chose life'"*

*[R 137]*

*(D.A.N. Jones in The Sunday Telegraph on Amos Tutuola's Pauper, Brawler and Slanderer).*

With its mainly literary approach (the literary reference to Dylan Thomas and the quotation of Rebecca West; the description of the 'style', 'still unspoiled, unimproved'; the use of adjectives such as 'poetic' and 'incorrect' or the slightly contrived expression 'artfully artless') this review would appear to confirm the fact (predicted in the section devoted to Wole Soyinka) that as one moves from left-wing newspapers

towards right-wing ones, literary references tend to become increasingly important.

These reviews also show that the 'cultural' approach tends to be avoided by right-wing newspapers.

In particular, a comparison between two reviews taken from papers that are representative of opposite ideological positions, such as R 281 (from Il Manifesto) and R 136 (from The Daily Telegraph), would allow one to point to the different ways in which the readers of each paper are supposed to decode or interpret Amos Tutuola's writing.

The Daily Telegraph's readers are told that it is a case of 'magical writing' (ie, it does not necessarily need to be rationalized) and that Amos Tutuola uses English words 'to express untranslatable African ideas'.

The fact that African ideas are untranslatable implies that there is no way of trying to bridge the gap of otherness and readers should therefore be happy with the distance existing - and reinforced by the review - between the West and the Yoruba culture).

R 281, on the other hand, provides its readers with guidelines and background information as to how to interpret the use of repetitions or the first person singular pronoun. This information probably allows Amos Tutuola's writing to become slightly less 'magical' or 'mysterious', while 'African ideas' are likely to be perceived as slightly more translatable than might have been expected.

In the case of R 281, the readers are thus 'guided' or 'led' towards a way of overcoming or dealing with 'otherness', ie a way of decoding it without the imposition of Eurocentric parameters of interpretation.

R 137, moreover, contains a reference to primitivism, mainly in the description of Tutuola's style as 'unspoiled', an adjective often found in 'exotic' descriptions of Africa, especially in tourist brochures. The adjective 'unspoiled', if one refers once again to Johannes Fabian's figure, belongs to the set of semantic oppositions previously identified, ie rational/civilized Western metropolis as opposed to primitive/irrational Africa.

Finally, R 137 also appears to contain a contradiction. Amos Tutuola is supposed to 'seize on attractive English words to express untranslatable African ideas'. Even supposing that 'untranslatable ideas' can be translated eventually (as Peter Newmark argues in A Textbook of Translation, Prentice Hall, London, 1988) the whole concept of 'untranslatable African ideas' points to an incomprehensible/primitive/irrational Africa that may be regarded as opposed to a comprehensible/civilized/rational Western metropolis.

Resorting to dichotomies such as 'civilized' vs 'primitive' in the representation of Africa, may be regarded as an attempt to dominate or control Africa, ie as a manner of regularized writing dominated by perspectives suited to Africa.

One might therefore conclude, (paraphrasing Edward Said and referring to Michel Foucault's notions of 'discourse' and 'power'), that primitivism and exoticism may be regarded as part and parcel of what might be defined as 'Africanism', ie as a Western style for dominating, restructuring and eventually having authority over Africa.

### Conclusion

This part of the analysis has thus confirmed the existence of different trends as far as the domestication of African literature is concerned.

There are two main ways of representing a book of Black African literature. The first one is characterized by a domestication that resorts to a 'cultural' approach which aims at providing readers with as much background information as possible, in an attempt to allow them to decode the African book and bridge the presumed gap of 'otherness' without denying the coevalness of the two cultures involved.

The other way consists in what may be (comparatively) regarded as a denial of coevalness between the two cultures. It is achieved by means of frozen images that allow one of the cultures to dominate while reducing the other culture to a set of 'exotic'/'primitive' images.

However, this kind of denial of coevalness may also be achieved by a consistent use of oversimplification and generalization that tends to represent Africa as one big homogeneous continent and thus prevent readers from realizing that Africa is made up of a series of different cultural realities.

The main implication of this idea of one 'Africa' is that, in some reviewers' view, it allows Western discourse to dominate, restructure and therefore have authority over Africa.

c) Ngugi wa Thiong'o

The third and final Black African writer analysed in this section is Ngugi wa Thiong'o. As was mentioned earlier on in this chapter, no reviews of Ngugi wa Thiong'o's books can be found amongst the right-wing papers taken into account.

There are only four reviews. Two of them come from distinctly left-wing newspapers, namely Il Manifesto and The Morning Star. The others have been found in The Guardian and The Independent.

If the trends previously identified are going to remain valid, then the two reviews coming from Il Manifesto and The Morning Star (the latter in particular) will have to stress the political implications of Ngugi wa Thiong'o's works. On the other hand, The Guardian and The Independent, while still pointing out the ideological aspect of the author's works, should equally emphasize their literary/artistic character.

Moreover, the four reviews should also tend to include the political and literary references in the wider 'cultural' representation that has so far proved to be a rather typical approach in the case of Black African literature, at least as far as progressive and left-wing papers are concerned.

The first extract is taken from The Morning Star.

*"Ngugi's new novel is a parable of liberation intended primarily for an African readership"*

[...]



*"Matigari is a work of art with a purpose of addressing its readers to the struggle for freedom"*

*[...]*

*"[referring to Kenya] an entire population being squeezed to death by the local servants of the US and European multinational companies"*

*[...]*

*"These may not be the central criteria generally accepted for excellent and effective literature in university seminar rooms and within the pages of learned critical tomes, but they form the foundation of the literature we need, in order to strike chords of consciousness and begin to change the world around us"*

*[R 49]*

*(Chris Searle in The Morning Star on Ngugi wa Thiong'o's Matigari).*

This extract confirms the points raised above. The book is introduced by means of mainly ideological references, set in a kind of wide contextualization.

First of all the book is defined as 'a parable of liberation intended primarily for an African readership' with the aim of 'addressing its readers to the struggle for freedom'.

The ideological message of the book is explained further in the reference to Kenya as a country whose population is being 'squeezed to death' by 'local servants of the US and European multinational companies'.

The key words in this representation are: 'liberation', 'struggle', 'multinational companies' etc. This kind of vocabulary is typical of left-wing reviews. The same words were previously found in the analysis of White South African literature. In fact, words such as 'oppression' and 'struggle' were found in the review of Nadine Gordimer's book Something Out There in L'Humanité.

The definition of 'the literature we need' in R 49 is quite significant too. Perhaps the whole sentence ('the literature we need in order to strike chords of consciousness and begin to change the world around us') could be paraphrased. If one replaces the word 'literature' with the word 'review' the extract might be regarded as a definition of the aim of what the reviewer regards as 'committed' reviewing.

The review taken from Il Manifesto appears to have exactly the same mainly ideological approach. There is one difference however. In order perhaps to add credibility to the article, the reviewer includes an extract from an interview with Ngugi wa Thiong'o.

*[Ngugi's words]"Io ho semplicemente deciso da che parte stare nella lotta di classe: ho deciso di scrivere, parlare e lavorare a favore dei contadini e dei lavoratori"*

[R 280]

*"I have simply decided on whose side I am in the class struggle: I have decided to write, speak and work in favour of peasants and workers"*

[R 280]

*(Cristiana Pugliese in Il Manifesto on Ngugi wa Thiong'o).*

In this review, Kenya is represented as a country locked in an extremely difficult political situation. The same references to neo-colonialism and class struggle (as in the previous extract) may be found and the key vocabulary, consequently, remains the same: 'workers', 'neo-colonialism', 'struggle' etc.

The next example is taken from The Guardian.

*"[It refers to Matigari]But something essential is lost to the English reader - both in translation and in our unfamiliarity with Ngugi's intended audience. The novel's rhythm and repetition are part of an oral tradition which doesn't translate well. [...] The parody is often heavy-handed and at the expence of the reader, who is given no room to find the meaning"*

*[...]*

*"Furthermore, Ngugi's characters are too obviously a mouthpiece for the author's rage against the authoritarian regime. But, then, again, Matigari's function is clearly polemic"*

*[R 39]*

*(Michelle Quinn in The Guardian on Ngugi wa Thiong'o's Matigari).*

As was predicted, the introduction is still characterized by a strong ideological flavour. However, in comparison with the previous extracts, there is more emphasis on the literary character.

The reader is still provided with some guidelines as to how to contextualize the book. For example, he is informed that this book has been influenced by an 'oral tradition', that the author's intention in writing the book is 'clearly polemic', that the book expresses the author's 'rage against an authoritarian regime'.

Moreover, the reviewer also aims at 'preparing' the readers by informing them that the [English] parody is often 'heavy-handed' and by referring to the readers' 'unfamiliarity with Ngugi's intended audience'. This kind of information is very similar to the guidelines that were provided by Il Manifesto in the review of both Wole Soyinka's and Amos Tutuola's books.

The same kind of 'cultural' introduction, with equal

emphasis on political and literary references, may be found in R 43, taken from The Independent.

*"Kenya is one of the most repressive countries in Africa, a fact which is borne out by the number of lawyers and journalists and university lecturers who are at present imprisoned"*

[...]

*"Matigari, beautifully translated by Wangui wa Goro, is written with deliberate simplicity, which is in keeping with the author's decision to write primarily for ordinary Kenyans"*

[R 43]

*(A. Maja-Pearce in The Independent on Ngugi wa Thiong'o's Matigari).*

In spite of the two reviewers' completely different opinions, the approach adopted in reviewing remains the same: a 'cultural' domestication with parallel references to the ideological and the artistic dimensions of the book.

### Conclusion

The analysis of reviews of Black African literature has thus been completed. The results seem to confirm what was predicted at the beginning of this section.

As far as Question One is concerned, one would now say that domestication techniques tend to change as one moves from reviews of White South African writers to Black African writers. In fact, the increased elements of cultural 'otherness' (in the case of Black African literature) appears to require a different kind of representation.

In the case of White South African authors, there seem to be no real problems of cultural background. The main theme of this literature - ie apartheid - tends to be domesticated simply by means of political references. The other references tend to be literary or artistic.

With Black African literature, on the other hand, reviewers tend (ie, feel they are obliged) to provide readers with a kind of 'cultural' introduction characterized by background information and guidelines that aim at a comprehensive contextualization. Both literary and ideological references - blended in different ways according to the author's type of writing and the reviewer's stance - remain part and parcel of this kind of approach.

However, in the case of Black African literature, there is another alternative to the 'cultural' approach. As

one moves from left-wing newspapers towards the right and the Catholic press, the 'cultural' approach tends to be replaced by an 'exotic' approach.

A reviewer who resorts to an 'exotic' approach may be motivated by his intention to provide a clear representation of Africa and thus to allow readers to bridge the presumed gap of otherness. However, a comparative analysis of the texts characterized by both the 'cultural' and the 'exotic' approach shows that the 'exotic' approach, in the end, appears to stress the fact that the gap of otherness cannot be bridged and that the existing distance is to be kept between the reader and the book of African literature. This effect is achieved by means of a representation technique that tends to resort to frozen, stereotype images that deny the coevalness between the two cultures, thus allowing Western culture to dominate, restructure and therefore have authority over Africa.

### SECTION THREE: NORTH AFRICAN LITERATURE

#### a) Naguib Mahfouz

This section will try to find out how 'otherness' is dealt with in the case of North African literature.

In the case of North African literature, one might expect to find a different kind of otherness, perhaps one that is closely related to 'Orientalism', due to the cultural links between North Africa and the culture of the 'Arabian Nights'. That would probably imply different types of familiarization techniques.

Naguib Mahfouz is the first of the two writers who epitomize North African literature.

The first review analysed is taken from the Italian left-wing newspaper Il Manifesto.

*"il primo capace di rendere [...] espressivamente modernissimo lo choc tremendo al quale da decenni il mondo arabo viene sottoposto (colonizzazione, dramma palestinese ecc.)"*

[R 283]

*"he is the first one who has been able to give the world [...] an expressive and modern picture of the shock the Arab world has been undergoing for decades (colonization, Palestinian issue etc.)"*

[R 283]

(Cristiana Pugliese in Il Manifesto on Naguib Mahfouz).

The author is introduced by means of a mainly ideological approach. His work is contextualized through the references to the Arab world and its problems. In this sense, words such as 'colonisation' and 'Palestinian issue' provide the links between the author and the reality behind the book.

This representation confirms the existence of a trend that characterizes the reviewing of left-wing newspapers.

The following review is taken from La Repubblica.

*"Ne risulta un quadro dell'islamismo egiziano ricco di dettagli [...]. Una trama che ha la possanza dei grandi affreschi"*

[R 31]

*"[The novel] is a detailed picture of Egyptian Islam. [...] a plot that has the power of the great frescoes"*

[R 31]

(Fabio Ciriachi in La Repubblica on Naguib Mahfouz's Palace Walk).

In the above extract the domestication of otherness takes place by means of two 'artistic' references. Both the words 'painting' and 'fresco', (this also refers to the word 'picture' utilized in the previous extract), emphasize the representative power of reviewing. In both extracts, the reviewer is therefore providing readers first and foremost with a visualization of what he assumes to be the reality behind the book.

The next review is taken from The Guardian.



*"Most of us, if we have been properly brought up, will have been subjected without realizing it to Oriental, Arabic influences in our early reading [...] Much of the stuff of fairy stories originates in a culture different from our own, yet lives in our memories. I say this because I feared that I might find Palace Walk by Naguib Mahfouz alien and difficult to follow and yet I felt at home from the first page, with a sense of familiarity and ease"*

*[...]*

*"It is Mahfouz's wonderful ability to delineate human beings from their outer appearance to their innermost preoccupations which gives Palace Walk its universal appeal. I will read it again and again."*

*[R 6]*

*(Alice Thomas Ellis in The Guardian on Naguib Mahfouz's Palace Walk).*

This is an example of a representation carried out by means of literary references. It may be regarded as an attempt to bridge the gap of otherness by pointing to the fact that a certain part of Oriental culture has been assimilated by Western culture through fables and tales.

However, the approach still remains distinctly literary, in the sense that the other aspect of the book - ie the book as an ideologically-oriented product of a certain social/political/historical reality - appears to be ignored.

R 9, taken from The Independent seems to have adopted the same literary approach, as the following extract will illustrate.

*"[In Palace Walk] Mahfouz has created characters who are larger than life and yet perfectly credible, and he has explored their inner life with marvellous psychological penetration."*

[...]

"This is writing worthy of Tolstoy, Flaubert or Proust"

[...]

"He forged for himself an Arabic that combines the simplicity of the spoken language with the universality of the classical"

[R 9]

(Philip Stewart in The Independent on Naguib Mahfouz's Palace Walk).

Once again, the book and the author are introduced by means of literary references: the references to 'Tolstoy, Flaubert or Proust', to the language he forged, to the 'characters' and to Naguib Mahfouz's 'marvellous psychological penetration'.

The same book is also reviewed by Le Monde and El País. The first extract is taken from Le Monde.

"Un livre qui a la force du fleuve"

[...]

"Le sort d'Amina, fait d'abnégation et d'injustice [...] est certes un autre morceau d'anthologie"

[...]

"L'on pense à [...] Tolstoï et Balzac, le tout parfaitement intégré dans une pâte nommée 'egyptianité', faite elle-même des vieux contes pharaoniques et des 'Mille et une nuits', sans oublier un bon zeste de Coran"

[R 231]

"A book that has the power of a river"

[...]

"Amina's fate, made up of self-denial and injustice [...] is no doubt worthy of being included in an anthology"

[...]

"One thinks of Tolstoy and Balzac; both of them are perfectly amalgamated in a mixture [lit. 'dough'] called

*'Egyptianity', itself made up of old pharaonic tales as well as the Arabian Nights, and even the Koran"*

[R 231]

*(J.-P. Peroncel-H. in Le Monde on Naguib Mahfouz's Palace Walk).*

This review is characterized by a representation that tends to resort mainly to literary references. Predictably, literary references deal with the 'Arabian Nights', the text that appears to act as a cultural 'filter' in the sense that it allows images of otherness to become domesticated.

The reviews so far analysed seem to point to two main types of literary approach and to one type of political /historical reference in the case of North African literature.

Historical/ideological references tend to contextualize North African literature (Egyptian so far) in the situation of the Middle East. Literary references, on the other hand, tend to follow two lines: one of them goes back to the Arabian Nights and Oriental/Pharaonic tales in general, whereas the other links North African literature with the great Western classic authors: Tolstoy, Balzac etc., who, at least in the case of Naguib Mahfouz, also had a major influence on the author.

A mainly literary approach also characterizes the following review, taken from El País.

*"El mundo editorial español se encuentra hoy ante un vasto océano que hasta el momento había ignorado: la literatura árabe"*

[...]

*"El virus del apremio nobelístico no justifica esta traducción [...] plagada de arabismos no traducidos [del inglés] al castellano, de personajes cuyos nombres evocan sombrero hongo y paraguas más que la típica*

*galabeyya egipcia y con una carencia absoluta de notas, imprescindibles en ciertos casos para que el lector occidental comprenda el sentido del texto"*

[R 122]

*"The Spanish publishing world is currently facing an ocean it had so far ignored: Arabic literature"*

[...]

*"The Nobel Prize virus does not justify this translation, marred by Arabisms untranslated [from English, not from Arabic!] into Spanish, by characters whose names evoke bowler hats and umbrellas rather than the typical Egyptian galabiyya, by a total lack of notes, notes that would have been essential in some cases for Western readers to be able to understand the text"*

[R 122]

*(Yolanda Gonzales in El País on Naguib Mahfouz's Palace Walk).*

This extract, still characterized by mainly literary references, in comparison with the other articles, has a rather ironic and polemic attitude. First of all, it gently mocks the Nobel Prize effect by referring to it in terms of a 'virus'. Moreover, it tackles the issues of translation and notes. Both issues appear to be relevant in the domestication of otherness.

As far as translations are concerned, this review seems to hint at the fact that the Nobel Prize effect (or 'virus') may lead publishers to translate a book (originally written in Arabic) from another language, English in this case, into Spanish. In terms of both money and time, resorting to English probably allows publishers to economize. However, one might wonder whether and how such a translation is going to portray the original text. Moreover, even accepting the fact that such a translation may be technically perfect, it is the whole idea of a work commissioned in haste (because books have to be on display immediately after the Nobel Prize

award) that, in the reviewer's view, sounds disturbing.

The fact that this is not the only review that deplores the lack of notes, while emphasizing the importance of translation, shows how important both issues are in order to 'facilitate' the decoding or interpretation of a text.

Technically, translator's notes, footnotes and glossaries might even be called 'facilitators' in this sense. They certainly help reduce the risk of misinterpretation or distortion of meaning.

The following reviews of Naguib Mahfouz's books are taken from right-wing newspapers. The first one comes from Le Figaro.

*"Lecteur occidental avide d'action, ôtez votre montre de votre poignet, arrêtez votre temps pour vous mettre au rythme de ce livre à la fois lent et dense"*

[...]

*"Des dialogues truculents reflètent le doux langage du peuple d'Egypte, alors que certaines pages nous font penser à Balzac, à sa comédie humaine"*

[R 224]

*"Western reader, greedy for action, remove your watch, stop your time and follow the rhythm of this book, at the same time slow and dense"*

[...]

*"Some of the truculent dialogues reflect the sweet language of the Egyptian people, whereas some pages remind us of Balzac and his 'Comédie Humaine'"*

[R 224]

*(Venus Khoury-Ghata in Le Figaro on Naguib Mahfouz's Palace Walk).*

In this review there is no reference to the political

situation in the Middle East. This shows that in the reviewing of right-wing newspapers, references tend to concentrate increasingly on the literary aspect of the book.

Finally, two reviews of Naguib Mahfouz's books, taken from ABC.

*"¿Es la novela un género 'europeo'? La respuesta ha de ser afirmativa, aunque admita matizaciones, y una obra como ésta de Naguib Mahfouz lo corrobore plenamente"*

[...]

*"¿Se disminuye, reconociéndolo así, el valor de la obra de Mahfouz? En modo alguno"*

[...]

*"Lo único que cabe deducir, legitimamente, de esta clase de filiaciones, es la fecundidad de un género, la riqueza de unas formas literarias capaces de resistir con éxito a la emigración a otros mundos, a otros ambitos culturales e ideológicos"*

[...]

*"¿No fue Balzac quien dijo que la novela era la historia privada de las naciones?"*

[R 62]

*"Is the novel a 'European' genre? The answer can only be affirmative, although one has to admit the existence of 'tingeing'/'shading' as in the case of Naguib Mahfouz's books"*

[...]

*"Does that admission reduce the value of Naguib Mahfouz's works? Absolutely not."*

[...]

*"The only thing we can say is that this kind of 'filiation' proves the fecundity of a genre, the richness of some literary forms that are capable of successfully adjusting to emigration to other worlds, cultures and ideological realities"*

[...]

*"After all, didn't Balzac say that the novel is the private history of nations?"*

*[R 62]*

*(M. García-Posada in ABC on Naguib Mahfouz's Palace Walk).*

These extracts concentrate on the literary aspects of Naguib Mahfouz's work. Such a representation could not be defined 'cultural' in the sense that has been pointed out in the analysis of Black African literature. However, a comparison between this review and other reviews having a mainly literary approach (like those found in the analysis of White South African literature, for example) points to the fact that R 62 adopts a significantly wide-ranging or comprehensive literary approach.

In R 62, the reviewer tends to contextualize the book in question by referring back to the origin of the novel as a 'genre' (born in Europe) and by pointing out the significance of its literary 'filiations'.

The same kind of domestication may be found in R 111, still published in the ABC, though one year earlier than R 62. The year of publication may be easily detected because of the 'ironic' reference to the Nobel Prize and its effect.

*"Como era de esperar, el universo literario de Naguib Mahfouz, el último premio Nóbel, comienza a tomar posesión de los espacios editoriales de todo el mundo, con el reto indudable de hacer chocar las galaxias de los mundos que en buena parte se ignoran. La compleja sociedad árabe que dibuja Naguib Mahfouz en su obra se incrusta así en la civilización occidental"*

*[R 111]*

*"As was expected, Naguib Mahfouz's literary universe, the latest Nobel Prize, begins to get hold of the publishing space all over the world, with the undoubtable*

*challenge of shocking the world's galaxies, most of which ignore one another. The complex Arab society described by Naguib Mahfouz in his work is thus engraved upon the Western civilization"*

[R 111]

*(Juan P. Quiñonero in ABC on Naguib Mahfouz's Palace Walk).*

The article also includes a somehow 'predictable' reference to the European classics (Zola, etc).

Perhaps this kind of mainly literary representation, in the case of North African literature, is justified by the fact that there have always been cultural contacts and mutual influences between the Western and the Arab/North African civilizations. As a result, North African literature may be regarded as comparatively less 'other' and thus less in need of what has been regarded as the 'cultural' approach.



### Conclusion

The analysis of the reviews of Naguib Mahfouz's books has shown that they are characterized by a mainly literary approach. Although in the case of a left-wing newspaper a double, political and literary reference has been detected, reviewers, as a whole, do not appear to resort to the 'cultural' approach in this case. North Africa is regarded as less 'other' than Black Africa: geographical vicinity and historical links have always allowed a significant amount of mutually enriching cultural exchanges (such as the 'Arabian Nights' for instance).

This may lead one to point to different degrees of otherness in the European representation of African literature. Each degree of otherness, in the reviewers' opinions, seems to require a different familiarization technique, or a different filter that makes the domestication possible.

In the case of North African literature, the three filters are provided by the tradition of the 'Arabian Nights', the non-European filiations of a European literary genre (the novel) and, for what concerns ideological references, the Middle Eastern conflicts.

b) Tahar Ben Jelloun

Tahar Ben Jelloun is the last author analysed in the section on North African literature as well as in the present chapter.

The first review is taken from La Repubblica.

*"[riferendosi ai 'racconti impossibili' e alle 'non-storie' della letteratura tardo novecentesca] la struttura del romanzo non potrebbe essere più impossibile[...] di come è"*

*[...]*

*"'Creatura d Sabbia' [è] una sorta di catalogo delle varie forme di agonia concesse oggi all'istituzione letteraria; ma è precisamente in virtù di quel catalogo che la letteratura sembra poter rinascere, ricca e trionfante, dalle proprie ceneri"*

*[R 132]*

*"[Referring to the 'impossible stories' and 'non-stories' of the literature at the end of the present century] the structure of this novel [The Sand Child] could hardly be more 'impossible' than it is"*

*[...]*

*"'The Sand Child' [...] is a sort of catalogue of the different forms of agony that literature is now allowed to indulge in; however, it is thanks to that catalogue that literature appears to be born again, rich and triumphant, from its own ashes"*

*[R 132]*

*(S. Giovanardi/N. Aspesi in La Repubblica on Tahar Ben Jelloun's The Sand Child).*

This representation concentrates on the literary aspect of the book. This is demonstrated by the references to 'modernism', to 'impossible stories' and 'non-stories'. In other words, Tahar Ben Jelloun's book is contextualized in terms of belonging to the so-called modernist tradition, a distinctly Western tradition.

The second part of the review, however, includes an interview with the author, in which he describes the situation in France, tackling issues such as racism and the far right political leader Le Pen. Subsequently, the author links the reference to the situation in France with his own novel:

*"Per fortuna io temo la purezza delle razze"*

[...]

*"Se nel mio romanzo il protagonista è una donna-uomo, è perché io credo nell'ambiguità, nella dualità delle lingue, delle culture"*

[R 132]

*"Fortunately, I fear the purity of races"*

[...]

*"If the main character in my novel is a woman-man it is because I believe in ambiguity, in the duality of languages, of cultures"*

[R 132]

This review, taken from a left-wing newspaper, therefore introduces the author by means of a double, literary and political set of references. The same approach has already been pointed out in the case of Naguib Mahfouz, in the analysis of R 283, taken from another left-wing newspaper, Il Manifesto. In R 132, the literary references deal with modernism, whereas the political references, introduced by means of a device such as the interview, tackle the issue of racism in France.

The second extract is taken from Le Monde

*"Tahar Ben Jelloun est un 'raconteur', et un séducteur.  
Mais aux charmes silencieux de l'Orient"*

[...]

*"à la fois totalement dans la tradition et totalement en rupture avec elle, fasciné par le flou des identités, les frontières mourantes du masculin et du féminin, de l'arabe et du français"*

[R 230]

*"Tahar Ben Jelloun is a 'raconteur'. And a seducer. But in the silently charming Oriental tradition"*

[...]

*"At the same time in line with tradition and totally in breach with it, fascinated by the fuzziness of identities, the crumbling borders between masculine and feminine, between Arabic and French"*

[R 230]

*(Josyane Savigneau in Le Monde on Tahar Ben Jelloun's The Sand Child).*

The 'otherness' of the book is described by means of a reference to the 'silently charming Oriental tradition', a representation that sounds comparatively exotic.

The rest of the review, however, consists of an analysis of Tahar Ben Jelloun's narrative style and is mainly based on literary references and characterized by phrases such as 'break with tradition', 'crumbling frontiers between masculine and feminine' etc.

The following review is taken from the Barcelona daily La Vanguardia. It is a long extract, however, it is rather significant for the purpose of this piece of research.

It deals mainly with the literary qualities and background. However, it is characterized by a comprehensive contextualization. Literary references are followed by references to otherness, to the mutual ignorance among cultures.

*"Testimonio de una literatura próxima que nos es desconocida"*

*"Witness of a literature close and yet unknown to us"*  
[...]

*"Imagino que algo similar ocurre por parte de esos países respecto a la literatura española"*

*"I guess the same thing happens in those countries [reference to North African countries] as far as Spanish literature is concerned"*  
[...]

*"Tal vez el problema sea de comunicación con el lector occidental, a partir de una realidad de múltiples brazos, contradictoria y lejana, que nos es sensiblemente ajena"*

*"Perhaps it is a problem of communication with the Western reader, who finds himself facing a complex, distant and contradictory reality that is noticeably other to him"*  
[...]

*"La historia que en principio es admitida como real [...] paulatinamente va entrando en el terreno de la leyenda y construyendo un sugestivo retablo de crueldad, maravillas y exotismo. Hasta que el lector, ante esa realidad en rotación, llega a no saber con certeza cuál fue la verdadera historia de Ahmed"*

*"At the beginning it sounds like a real story [...], but then it starts turning into a legend, building up its fascinating picture of cruelty, marvels... and exoticism. To a point that the reader, facing such a kind*

of swirling reality, no longer knows which is Ahmed's real story"

[...]

"En cuanto a las formas verbales del relato, Jelloun entronca con las más antiguas raíces de la literatura oral árabe. Una manera episódica de narrar que permanece viva en el Islam y que al lector occidental le remite de nuevo a 'Las mil y una noches' "

"As far as the verbal forms of the tale are concerned, Tahar Ben Jelloun goes back to the most ancient roots of oral Arabic literature, a kind of narration that is still alive in the Islamic world and that, in the case of the Western reader, immediately points to the 'Arabian Nights' "

[...]

"Creo haber dejado bastante claro que la novela de Tahar Ben Jelloun - libro raro e inteligente - trasciende una culebreante fascinación. Pero si se quiere gozar en plenitud el texto, resulta indispensable entrar en él con el ánimo y la curiosidad en vilo que se llevan dispuestos para un viaje a otros ámbitos de sensibilidad distinta a la nuestra. Por otra parte, 'El niño de arena' es una excelente pero no gran novela. Aunque tal vez esa afirmación contenga una herejía. ¿Cómo se puede valorar con criterio tajante la primera obra que se lee de un escritor marroquí, cuando no se está familiarizado con la literatura que hoy se hace en Marruecos y en cuyo contexto forzosamente se inserta Tahar Ben Jelloun? La dificultad aconseja ser prudente"

"I think I have made it clear that Tahar Ben Jelloun's novel is a fascinating book [lit. has a slithery or zigzagging fascination], a rare and intelligent book. However, if one wants to fully enjoy the text, it is essential to read it with the same kind of curiosity and interest one has when one embarks on a trip to a country whose culture is different from one's own. 'The Sand Child' is an excellent though not a great book, however

*heretic such a statement may sound. How can one [ie a reviewer] fully judge the first book one reads by a Moroccan author when he is unable to contextualize it in the Moroccan literary scene? This would suggest that one has to be careful"*

*[R 164]*

*(Robert Saladrigas in La Vanguardia on Tahar Ben Jelloun's The Sand Child).*

The first part of the review consists of a distinctly literary approach. The reviewer deals with the story, the plot, its 'structure', the 'verbal forms', the themes etc.

The last part of the review, on the other hand, contains some reflections on the nature of reviewing and the difficulty a reviewer (and a reader) encounters when dealing with otherness. This is the reason why a very long extract has been entirely included in this section.

Due to the presence of such reflections, the review may be regarded as as kind of 'meta-review', a review that attempts to review or re-think itself. This may appear clear when the reviewer admits that it is difficult both 'to fully judge the first book one reads by a Moroccan writer' and 'to contextualize' the book when one does not know the 'Moroccan literary scene'.

For some reviewers, for instance, Tahar Ben Jelloun's book is the first book they read by a Moroccan writer, and probably they read it only because of the Goncourt Prix effect. Tahar Ben Jelloun's books 'have to' conquer the markets or at least be displayed in the bookshops a few weeks after the award.

This kind of admission has already been noticed in another review, in the chapter that dealt with the aims of reviewing. One of the reviewers of Wole Soyinka admitted quite frankly that, 'had it not been for the Nobel Prize'

he would have never read Wole Soyinka's books.

R 164, however, also contains some reflections on the rôle of the reader. In fact, the guideline provided may be read as a general reminder that a reader, in the reviewer's view, should always remain aware that reading a book of African literature means dealing with otherness: 'it is essential to read it with the same kind of curiosity and interest one has when one embarks on a trip to a country whose culture is different from one's own'.

Tahar Ben Jelloun is also reviewed by The Daily Telegraph and Le Figaro.

The review in The Daily Telegraph provides one more example of a very short text (it is part of a 'New fiction' section, a kind of multiple review that is a common feature of British newspaper reviewing).

*"[Reference to the Goncourt Prix] it is clear that [Tahar Ben Jelloun] is a fine writer"*

*[...]*

*"The translation, however, is patchy, which makes it less than easy to read"*

*[...]*

*"Nevertheless, it is an amusing, haunting and ultimately depressing story, without an end"*

*[R 36]*

*(Julia Neuberger in The Daily Telegraph on Tahar Ben Jelloun's The Sand Child).*

In the above review, because of the size of the review itself, the critic has to resort to brief statements. Consequently, there is no reference to 'otherness'. However, R 36 may be looked at in comparison with other reviews. To this aim, one may perhaps re-introduce the notion of 'ambiguity' (as it was defined earlier on in this thesis, ie ambiguity as the 'hidden review', the



'sub-text' or what a review only displays by means of a comparison with other reviews of the same book and author).

A comparison between R 36 and the previous review (R 164, loaded with guidelines and references to the mutual ignorance amongst cultures, the 'Arabian Nights', the story-telling tradition, the difficulties - for both reviewer and reader - of dealing with otherness) would point to the comparatively 'limited' or 'restricted' approach of R 36. The representation provided by R 36 appears to be limited to a series of adjectives: 'haunting', 'fine', 'depressing'.

The last review in this chapter is taken from Le Figaro.

*"Tahar Ben Jelloun a écrit là une histoire qui vient de loin"*

*[...]*

*"envoûtante et terrible histoire"*

*[...]*

*"la plus belle partie du livre est peut-être celle où Ahmed, l'enfant découvre ce qu'on lui dissimule: son propre sexe"*

*[...]*

*"Récit repris à plusieurs reprises par des conteurs successifs, dans la tradition des 'Mille et une nuits'"*

*[R 223]*

*"Tahar Ben Jelloun has written a story that comes from very far"*

*[...]*

*"a fascinating and terrible story"*

*[...]*

*"perhaps the most beautiful part of the book is when Ahmed, the child, discover what they hide from him: his own sex"*

[...]

"The story is told many times over by different narrators, in the tradition of the 'Arabian Nights'"

[R 223]

(Claire Gallois in Le Figaro on Naguib Mahfouz's The Sand Child).

This may be regarded as yet another example of a frequently adopted way of representing books of North African literature, especially amongst right-wing newspapers. The domestication of otherness is carried out mainly by means of literary references. The most typical, amongst these references, appears to be that to the 'Arabian Nights'.

In this particular review, the book is described as 'a story that comes from very far' (ie 'other'). Subsequently, the story is domesticated by means of a reference to the 'Arabian Nights'. This process may be regarded on the basis of Johannes Fabian's theory of representation of otherness. Fabian's figure has already been referred to in the sections on Black African literature. In the figure, a system of coordinates emanates from a centre, called 'civilization now', which is where the reviewer is located vis-à-vis the African book. The book comes from 'very far', ie from what Fabian regards as 'there' or 'then' (the primitive or savage society) and the tradition of the 'Arabian Nights' provides the reviewer (and the European reader) with a supposedly appropriate cultural filter.

### Conclusion

The reviews of Tahar Ben Jelloun's books are characterized by the same types of approach already identified in the case of Naguib Mahfouz.

Left-wing newspapers tend to adopt a double, literary and ideological approach (although the Middle Eastern contextualization is now replaced by the issue of French racism). The other papers appear to give priority to literary references. The two literary filters that have been identified are a reference to Western literary modernism (in the case of Mahfouz it was a reference to the European classic tradition) and the most frequently utilized reference to the 'Arabian Nights'.

The difference in terms of literary and ideological sets of references appears justified by the difference between the authors: Mahfouz is an Egyptian realistic writer, whereas Ben Jelloun is both a North African and a Paris-based modernist writer.

### Overall conclusion

This chapter aimed at answering two questions by means of a comparative analysis of reviews of White South African, Black African (Subsaharan) and North African literature.

The first question asked whether typical or predictable ways of representing African literature could be found. The answer seems to be affirmative, at least on the basis of the reviews analysed (reviews that claim a considerable degree of representativity).

One can find different ways of representing (ie dealing with otherness). Representations tend to change in accordance with the degree of 'otherness' of the book. This points to the presence of different degrees of 'otherness'. Black African literature, for instance, because of both its cultural distance and the lack of traditional cultural links with Europe, is more 'other' than White South African or North African literature.

Three different kinds of representation have been identified, although it must be stressed that, in reality, no review may be entirely identified with one of the three methods of representation. One of the following ways is likely to dominate in a review.

1) A representation based on political and/or literary

references (typical of White South African and North African literature). 'Otherness' is mainly represented by apartheid and its implications in the case of South Africa and by the tradition of the 'Arabian Nights' and/or the Middle Eastern conflicts in the case of North African literature.

2) A 'cultural' representation, based on a comprehensive approach where readers are provided with guidelines that emphasize ways of 'correctly' decoding the 'other' culture. Africa is represented as a series of different and dynamic realities. This approach, which tends to tackle as many cultural aspects as possible of the particular African culture involved, is often found in the reviewing of Black African literature. Background information is provided for instance on the Yoruba language, oral tradition, rhetoric, mythology etc.

3) An exotic representation, which is the opposite of the 'cultural' approach. Africa is represented as one big static continent. A comparison between the 'cultural' and the 'exotic' approach shows that in the latter the reader is provided with guidelines characterized by frozen, stereotype images that tend to deny the coevalness between the two cultures. This approach may often be found in right-wing reviews of Black African literature.

As far as Question Two is concerned, one may claim that ideological implications appear to be manifest (and thus predictable), although some papers, La Stampa and La Vanguardia provide one with two examples of traditionally conservative newspapers whose reviewers seem to ignore the paper's overall political line.

As a whole, in the case of White South African literature, the reviews analysed have shown that literary references

tend to replace political references in right-wing and Catholic newspapers. Meanwhile, the vocabulary tends to change: words such as 'oppressors and oppressed' become 'brothers', whereas 'a local struggle' becomes 'a universal tragedy'.

In the case of Black African literature, exotic representations tend to replace 'cultural' representations as one moves towards the right. Meanwhile, guidelines characterized by emphasis on a 'correct' decoding of the 'other' text (guidelines that implicitly stress the fact that both cultures are on a level of parity) tend to be replaced by frozen and stereotype images that deny the coevalness of the two cultures.

Finally, in the case of North African literature (which is culturally less distant and thus less 'other' in comparison with Black African literature) a 'literary' approach seems to be rather frequent. Again, as in the case of White South African literature, political references tend to become less frequent in right-wing newspapers.

One further consideration that can perhaps be ventured at this point is that the nature of the book (realistic tale, fictionalized documentary, memoir, fairy-tale, magic realism, surrealism, modernism etc.) is also likely to determine what kind of approach a reviewer adopts in the representation of the book and the domestication of its otherness.

However, the examples have also shown that the nature of the book may also be ignored, while the approach to the book is carried out by means of carefully selected kinds of representation. This aspect has been illustrated by those reviews in which a whole dimension of the book is virtually ignored, like in the case of books reviewed without any reference to their supposed

artistic/literary value (in The Morning Star) or, vice versa, books reviewed without any reference to their presumed ideological subversiveness in relation to the status quo (as in the case of some reviews in right-wing papers).

...

At this point, having completed the central part of this thesis, ie the comparative theme-oriented analysis of the newspaper reviewing of African literature, it might be worth introducing the findings of another survey, carried out by Transcultura (a joint operation in which African, French, Italian and Chinese specialists took part in 1991). It might also be worth referring to Edward Said's views illustrated in Orientalism, in order to find out whether his findings also apply to the field of 'African literature'.

a) A survey carried out by Transcultura

The book based on the survey is divided into three sections, dealing with 'reciprocal anthropology' (by Alain Le Pichon), the relationship between a European city and Africa (by Moussa Sow) and, finally, a theoretical introduction to 'cultural relativism' (by Wang Bin).

The first section stresses the importance of 'reciprocal anthropology' meant as the overturning (or at least the theoretical possibility of it) of the existing anthropology perceived as a form of 'domination' of the West over Africa.

Ludwig Wittgenstein's [Zettel] and Claude Lévi-

Strauss' [Antropologia strutturale due] images are referred to in order to illustrate the meaning of reciprocal anthropology: two trains crossing each other represent the condition of reciprocity in which Western anthropology and the observed cultures should find themselves.

This situation, however, contrasts with the reality, described by Le Pichon who quotes Alain Ricard in Politique Africaine, n. 8, in which he claims that '*the African is invited to play a game without having being invited to freely choose the rules*' (1).

The situation pointed out by Alain Ricard has been illustrated in the present piece of research. Only a few reviews (Chapter Six) appear to stress the importance of reciprocity in anthropology and thus in the reviewing of African literature. It is the case of those reviews that avoided the denial of coevalness between cultures.

The second section analyses the different discourses on Africa that may be found in Bologna (regarded as an 'average' European city). The discourses are partly the result of the links existing between Bologna and Africa. Several institutions or centres are identified: educational systems, mass media, the presence of African immigrants, universities and their links with Africa, the NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations), cultural associations (such as anti-apartheid groups), the unions, political parties, even travel agencies.

The considerations that emerged from the survey carried out by Transcultura are not distant from those that emerged in the central part of the present piece of research, carried out at the same time but on the basis of different data.



Moussa Sow claims that, having interviewed a very large number of people belonging to a variety of professional and social categories, one can point to a tendency toward uniformity (and predictability) in the representations of Africa.

He points to a stereotype vision of Africa in which the only differences appear to result from the personal level of education.

Sow attempts an analysis of the different discourses on Africa existing in Bologna. He concludes that they all appear to be dominated by an element of Eurocentrism, the ambiguous rhetoric of Third-Worldism, the presence of traditional or codified discourses or images.

Africa turns up to be generally perceived as an immense continent, wild, fascinating, unfortunately characterized by irrationalism (corruption, famine, disorder...). The key words in representations of Africa are: colonization, apartheid, racism...

The above considerations would seem to apply to the analysis of discourses which emerged in this thesis.

Sow, however, extends his survey to all discourses. He starts with an analysis of school text-books, and he points out *'the use of concepts derived from the ethnographic tradition, characterized by oversimplification and the reduction of complex realities to dichotomies, [...] structures that cause a piling up of pejorative categorizations for what concerns Africa' (2)* as opposed to positive categorizations for what concerns Europe.

Moreover, he adds, *'teaching tends to aim at eliciting pathos amongst pupils' (3)*.

Subsequently, Sow analyses the language of holiday brochures, in which frozen images dominate, images that eliminate all contrasts or dichotomies and present Africa as a continent of wild, charming beauty. The only contrasts referred to are natural: '*the diversity of landscapes*' (4) for instance.

Holiday brochures tend to treat African countries as if they were still colonies, where tourists are supposed to go for sun, sea, sand and sex. The indigenous people are generally portrayed as servile natives who are there to cater for every whim. Holiday brochures too often feature young white people with locals portrayed as smiling servants or sexual lures.

Finally, Sow's analysis of the Catholic discourse as well as those of the cultural/political associations reveals the same ideological overlays pointed out in this survey (Chapter Six). This may be seen in a self-explanatory table in which Sow summarizes the character of ideological discourses as far as Africa is concerned.

Not surprisingly, the table could be read as part of Chapter Six of this thesis, particularly as an answer to Question Two (are ideological overlays always manifest in representations of Africa?):

Dominant themes	Press		
	Catholic	right	progressive left
cult./ spiritual dimension of developm.	+++		
neocolonialism		+	++ +++
universality	+++		

#### b)Parallels with Said's Orientalism

In Orientalism (1978) Said claims that '*Orientalism can [...] be regarded as a manner of regularized (or Orientalized) writing, vision, and study, dominated by imperatives, perspectives, and ideological biases ostensibly suited to the Orient*' (5).

These words seem to apply to Africa as well, and if one replaces the word 'Orient' with the word 'Africa', the whole sentence becomes: '*Africanism can be regarded as a manner of regularized (or Africanized) writing, vision, and study, dominated by imperatives, perspectives, and ideological biases ostensibly suited to Africa*', which describe the attitude towards African literature that is typical of some reviewers as well as the attitudes to African literature other reviewers have attacked in the reviews analysed in this survey and in Chapter Six in particular.

In Orientalism, Edward Said succeeds in isolating and discrediting a number of 'oriental' stereotypes: the eternal and unchanging East, the sexually insatiable Arab, the 'feminine' exotic, the teeming marketplace, corrupt despotism, etc.

Similarly, the present analysis of reviews of African literature has isolated a number of African stereotypes, some of which are very similar to the Oriental ones:

- the eternal and unchanging Africa (ie Africa represented by means of a denial of coevalness);
- Africa as one big homogeneous continent (as opposed to Africa as a series of local realities);
- 'exotic' Africa: tam-tams, lions;
- tribal or folk-tale Africa;
- corrupt despotism etc.

In Said's analysis, the Orient exists uniquely for the West and his task is to dismantle the prejudices, commonplaces, received ideas and static images that characterize the Western ethnographic discourse on the Orient.

Similarly, one could therefore claim (and reviewers have done it) that Africa, at least in some of the reviews analysed, although by no means in all of them, exists uniquely for the West. One could then try to dismantle (by exposing them) the prejudices, commonplaces, received ideas and static images that characterize the Western ethnographic discourse on Africa. This is exactly what some reviewers have done in their reviews.

On the basis of Michel Foucault's notion of discourse as power (the notion illustrated in both The Archaeology of Knowledge and Discipline and Punish), Orientalism is regarded by Edward Said 'as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient' (6).

Moreover, according to the US-based Palestinian, the relationship between the West and the Orient is one of power, domination and a complex hegemony. The word 'hegemony', used in this context, is borrowed from

Antonio Gramsci.

In his Prison Notebooks (7), Gramsci claims that in every society certain cultural forms (or ideas) predominate over others. This cultural leadership may be defined as 'hegemony'.

Such a notion of 'hegemony', taken from Gramsci and subsequently expanded by Foucault and Said, according to some of the reviewers analysed, (Chris Searle in The Morning Star for instance), also seems to characterize the whole field of the reviewing of African literature, regarded not only as a representation of otherness but also as a way of coming to terms with the (presumed) Western hegemony.

As far as the notion of representation is concerned, Said makes it clear that *'the Orient [Africa, if one paraphrases it] is transformed from a very far, distant and often threatening Otherness into figures that are relatively familiar'* (8). Moreover, *'it needs to be made clear about cultural discourse and exchange within a culture, that what is commonly circulated by it is not "truth" but representation'* (9).

The different ways of representing otherness (by means of literary and/or ideological and/or cultural references as was illustrated in Chapter Six) in 'Africanism' are thus provided with a parallel in Orientalism..

The validity of the parallel is proved by the consistency of the paraphrased text, by the fact that it illustrates the situation that was analysed throughout this piece of research. The whole situation, in fact, may be summarized as follows:

*'that [Africanism] makes sense at all depends more on the West than on [Africa], and this sense is directly*

*indebted to various Western techniques of representation that make [Africa] visible, clear, "there" in discourse about it. And these representations rely upon institutions, traditions, conventions, agreed-upon codes of understanding for their effects, not upon a distant and amorphous [Africa].'* (10)

Subsequently, Said points out that the domestication of the exotic takes place between all cultures and stresses the fact that it is always characterized by a limited vocabulary and imagery.

This has been pointed out in the analysis of reviewing patterns, key words and images that characterize the reviewing of African literature in this survey.

The figures of speech associated with the Orient/Africa, according to Said, may be regarded as stylized costumes are to characters in a play: *'they are all declarative and self-evident [Tarzan]; the tense they employ is the timeless eternal [the denial of coevalness]; they convey an impression of repetition and strength; they are always symmetrical to, and yet diametrically inferior to, a European equivalent. [...] For all these functions, it is frequently enough to use the simple copula is'*(11)[eg. *Africa is wild; this book is ...*].

For what concerns the way in which reviews take part in the creation of discourse and tradition, Said provides a kind of warning that one should take into account while entering the network of the joint social operation of reviewing: *'Such texts [reviews] can create not only knowledge but also the very reality they appear to describe [the 'fiction' referred to in Section One of the present chapter]. In time such knowledge and reality produce a tradition, or what Michel Foucault calls a discourse'* (12).

If one looks at the whole issue of representation of otherness in the reviewing of African literature, in the light of Said's ideas, one might conclude that the main danger in this type of reviewing, as a number of reviewers have pointed out in the reviews analysed in Chapter Six, is *Euroanthropocentrism*. In other words, a reviewer (= an Africanist) does not, as he believes or claims, stand apart from Africa objectively. He has to deal with the weight of the existing discourses on Africa. His Africa, therefore, is not Africa as it is, but '[Africa] as it has been [Africanized]' (13).

### Notes

- (1) Alain Le Pichon  
'Cronache dell'antropologia reciproca'  
Sguardi venuti da lontano: un'indagine di  
Transcultura  
Bompiani, Milano, 1991, p. 51
- (2) Moussa Sow  
'Un gioco di specchi: lo sguardo dei bolognesi  
sull'Africa'  
Sguardi venuti da lontano: un'indagine di  
Transcultura  
Bompiani, Milan, 1991, p. 140
- (3) Ibid.
- (4) Ibid., p. 142
- (5) Edward Said  
Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient  
Penguin, London, 1991, p. 202  
Routledge & Kegan Paul, Boston etc., 1978
- (6) Ibid., p. 3
- (7) Antonio Gramsci  
Quaderni dal carcere  
Einaudi, Turin, 1975
- (8) Orientalism, p.21
- (9) Ibid.
- (10) Ibid., p. 22
- (11) Ibid., p. 94
- (12) Ibid.,
- (13) Ibid., p. 104



## PART THREE

### CASE-STUDY WORK

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### THE STYLE AND TECHNIQUE OF SOME REGULAR REVIEWERS

#### Introduction

This chapter aims at analysing the reviews written by a number of 'regular' contributors. It will deal with their style and technique as well as with the character of their 'personal discourse' on Africa.

Each critic, as a result of both the number of reviews collected and the coverage over time of this piece of research, may be seen to develop a personal discourse on African literature.

In the case of each reviewer, reviews will be analysed in order to identify their recurrent frameworks as well as their typical themes.

The statistical analysis in Chapter Two indicates that the most regular contributors are the following:

- Cristiana Pugliese, who wrote more than 20 reviews for Il Manifesto during the period 1986-1988;
- Chris Searle, who wrote 11 reviews for The Morning Star during the period 1986-1990;

- Tahar Ben Jelloun, who wrote 10 reviews for Le Monde during the period 1983-1989.

The above are the most 'regular' reviewers. However, a number of less frequent reviewers have been identified as well:

- Norman Shrapnel, who wrote 9 reviews for The Guardian during the period 1981-1989;

- Claudio Gorlier, who wrote 9 reviews for La Stampa during the period 1983-1990;

- Claude Prévost, who wrote 6 reviews for L'Humanité during the period 1985-1989.

- Christopher Wordsworth, who wrote 6 reviews for The Guardian during the period 1985-1989.

Norman Shrapnel's and Christopher Wordsworth's reviews will be analysed in Chapter Eight which will deal with very short reviews.

A look at the newspaper titles points to the significant fact that, with the single exception of La Stampa (whose literary magazine "Tuttolibri" does not reflect the newspaper's overall ideological stance), only left-wing or left-of-centre newspapers tend to use regular contributors as far as the reviewing of African literature is concerned, whereas the majority of right-wing dailies seems to depend on 'occasional' critics.

This chapter will be divided into three sections. Each section will be devoted to one of the three most regular reviewers.

a) Cristiana Pugliese

Cristiana Pugliese wrote more than 20 reviews for the Rome daily newspaper Il Manifesto. A total of 25 of her reviews appeared over a period of 32 months: the highest concentration of reviews of African literature that may be found in any of the newspapers analysed in this piece of research.

The reviews deal mainly with Black African writers. There are only two exceptions: North African writers Assia Djebar and Naguib Mahfouz.

Such a high number of reviews shows the critic's (and perhaps the newspaper's) effort to introduce African literature to Italian readers.

Moreover, very few of the reviews are written to coincide with the publication of the books. Many of the writers have not yet been translated into Italian.

The writers reviewed include some of the 'giants' of African literature (Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe, Amos Tutuola and Ngugi wa Thiong'o) as well as a number of comparatively 'minor' authors such as Chief D.O. Fagunwa, Bessie Head, Ama Ata Aidoo, Sembene Ousmane, Alex La Guma, Cyprian Ekwensi, Charles Mungoshi, Leonard

Kibera, Dambudzo Marechera. The authors include 5 women and 2 North African writers, one of whom is a woman.

A close look at the reviews confirms the fact that the reviewer has been developing a discourse on African literature. Being aware that African literature in Italy has (or at least still had, in 1986) a very limited number of readers, mainly specialists, the reviewer starts her own discourse by introducing some of the most 'important' African writers: Wole Soyinka, Amos Tutuola, Chinua Achebe and Ngugi wa Thiong'o.

Some of the authors she introduces are not reviewed by any of the other newspapers in the decade analysed. This is the case for those writers (such as Leonard Kibera or Dambudzo Marechera) who may be considered 'minor' authors, compared to Wole Soyinka for instance.

There is also a certain emphasis on Kenyan literature, possibly due to the fact that the reviewer is also one of Italy's most respected specialists on African literature and Kenyan literature in particular. It is also noticeable that, at least as far as her reviewing experience with Il Manifesto is concerned, she has not reviewed White South African literature.

A number of reviews by Cristiana Pugliese will now be dealt with in an attempt to find out the typical framework of her reviews as well as the themes most frequently adopted.

The first review is R 214, dealing with Chief D.O. Fagunwa and Wole Soyinka. This is one of the rare occasions where the review coincides with the publication of the book. The review appears to have been written on the occasion of the publication of Chief D.O. Fagunwa's book 'La Foresta dei Mille Demonii' (an Italian translation of Wole

Soyinka's English version/translation of the book) by Mondadori. The review is very long and may be regarded as made up of two main sections (reviews and extract) which take up a whole page of the newspaper. Each section can be further divided into a number of parts (sub-reviews and extracts).

The whole review therefore consists of an alternation of reviewer's voice and authors' voices:

- introduction (reviewer's voice);
- glossary of Yoruba terms (authors' and reviewer's voices);
- sub-review: introduction to Yoruba literature and culture (reviewer's voice);
- sub-review: brief introduction to Chief D.O. Fagunwa (reviewer's voice);
- extract from Fagunwa's Igbo Olodumare (author's voice);
- sub-review: brief introduction to Wole Soyinka (reviewer's voice);
- extract from Soyinka's The Interpreters (author's voice).

The reviewer appears to be particularly concerned with the introduction of the two authors and of Yoruba literature as a whole. This can be seen quite clearly in the opening paragraph:

*"Ma in letteratura la lingua è tutto, ed [è] necessario dare un'idea del vocabolario mitico-sociale degli yoruba".*

*[...]*

*"Ecco quindi un mini-glossario, ricavato da un altro romanzo di Soyinka, 'Gli Interpreti'"*

*[R 214]*

*"But language is everything in literature and it [is] therefore necessary to give an idea of the mythical-social*

*vocabulary of the Yoruba"*

*[...]*

*"Here is a mini-glossary, taken from another novel by Wole Soyinka, 'The Interpreters'"*

*[R 214]*

The comparatively long review, aimed at introducing Yoruba culture, is characterized by the same concern with guidelines and background information. Readers are warned against the temptation of a simplistic and exotic interpretation. Moreover, details are provided about the Yoruba style (such as the aims of hyperbole and repetition). Finally, the Italian translator is gently criticized for "failing to recreate the original style and feeling".

The review starts with a quotation, a brief extract of Fagunwa's book, containing the description of a forest. The extract provides the reviewer with an opportunity to warn readers:

*"Una descrizione come questa non fa che soddisfare le aspettative di chi vuole leggere la letteratura africana in modo semplicistico, come un insieme di racconti folcloristici"*

*[R 214]*

*"A description like this only fulfils the expectations of those who like to read African literature in a simplistic way, as a series of folk-tales"*

*[R 214]*

Subsequently, she explains the character of Yoruba humour and the rhetoric of Yoruba tales.

*"le esagerazioni e [...] le stravaganze linguistiche costituiscono un espediente caratteristico dell'umorismo yoruba"*

*[...]*

*"l'amplificazione retorica, le ripetizioni e le variazioni si assommano in un crescendo che richiama quello dei tamburi nella musica yoruba"*

[R 214]

*"Exaggerations and [...] linguistic extravagance represent a typical device of Yoruba humour"*

[...]

*"rhetorical amplification, repetitions and variations follow one another in a crescendo that evokes that of drums in Yoruba music"*

[R 214]

These short guidelines, written in a reader-friendly style (in the sense that no 'awkward' or 'cryptic' technical terms are used) aim at preparing the reader, at allowing him to 'enjoy' the stories while he is decoding them or interpreting them in what the reviewer regards as a 'correct' way.

Finally, the Italian translator is 'accused' of 'having betrayed' or altered the original character of the book, mainly by not having been able to reproduce a 'uniform' style in Italian. He is accused of resorting to the use of two different linguistic registers (erudite and colloquial), an operation that results in the creation of *"an often archaic and often colourful lexicon"* that takes part in the *"smuggling of a primitive and picturesque image of Africa, a continent that for many people still remains a 'heart of darkness'"* [R 214]

*"Questo lessico a tratti arcaico, a tratti colorito, contribuisce a contrabbandare un'immagine primitiva e pittoresca dell'Africa, che per molti rimane ancora un 'cuore di tenebre'"*

[R 214]

The attack on the translator may also be regarded as a warning against an exotic interpretation, a point



already made clear at the beginning of the review. However, this kind of double (initial and final) stress on the danger of restricted interpretations seems to provide the review with a sense of coherence and internal balance.

The review may also be regarded as a series of guidelines. Having gone through them, the reader should subsequently feel ready to deal with the lower half of the page, where he will be provided with a brief introduction to the two authors, whom he will eventually be able to 'encounter' in the two extracts that complete the review.

As regards the framework of R 214, the items (previously identified) that make up the review (introduction, glossary, brief 'sub-reviews' and extracts) may be regarded as the carriers or 'containers' of three different types of information: guidelines, background to author and extracts.

It is at the level of guidelines and background information that the two most typical themes of Cristiana Pugliese's reviewing may be detected:

- a detailed and reader-friendly introduction to ONE particular African culture;
- a warning against the temptation of simplistic or exotic interpretations.

R 281, on Amos Tutuola is both structurally and thematically very similar to R 214. The review is followed by an extract, translated into Italian by the reviewer herself. The two sections, once again, are printed on a whole page of the newspaper.

The only difference between the two reviews is that R 281 does not coincide with the publication of any book by Amos

Tutuola. Therefore, the critic's intention to introduce African literature generally to Italian readers appears to be even more manifest.

As in the case of R 214, the critic is particularly concerned with the 'clarity' of the introduction, especially in terms of what she regards as 'clear' background information provided in a reader-friendly style that is illustrated by the following extracts:

*"Tutte le sue storie [...] si ispirano ai racconti popolari yoruba"*

*[...]*

*"Lo stile della narrazione è essenzialmente orale e l'uso della prima persona dona grande spontaneità al racconto"*

*[...]*

*"continue ripetizioni che hanno la funzione di scandire la successione degli eventi"*

*[R 281]*

*"All his stories are inspired by Yoruba folk-tales"*

*[...]*

*"The style of the narration is essentially oral and the use of the first person singular pronoun adds spontaneity to the tale"*

*[...]*

*"repetitions aim at pointing out the succession of events"*

*[R 281]*

The reviewer's concern for clarity and guidelines is also illustrated by a translator's note included in the translated passage that is part and parcel of the review. In the previous review a glossary was provided.

Taking the two reviews (R 214 and R 281) as part of an introduction to African literature, it is significant

that the series of reviews, (ie Cristiana Pugliese's own discourse on African literature), starts with two authors, Chief Fagunwa and Amos Tutuola, characterized by a particular kind of style and narration, a type of writing often defined as 'African magical realism', to distinguish it from that of Latin American writers such as García Marquez for instance.

In both cases, the approach tends to give priority to reading guidelines, background information and extracts which are aimed at helping readers bridge the gap of otherness.

R 215 was written on the occasion of the Nobel Prize award to Wole Soyinka in 1986. However, the review is a far cry from the celebratory articles that were published by some papers on that occasion.

R 215 is characterized by the same style and technique of the first two reviews analysed. The review, once again, takes up a whole page and is made up of two main sections: an introduction and some poems (never before published in Italy) translated by the reviewer.

The reviewer's approach is still characterized by a great concern with the clarity of background information and guidelines. In this case, however, it is possible to detect several references to Nigerian history and the contemporary political situation. The Biafran war is a particular topic.

The poems selected and translated by the reviewer, significantly *"were written by the author in prison, in Kaduna, after he was arrested for defending the Biafran cause during the Nigerian civil war"* [R 215]

*"Wole Soyinka scrisse questi versi nel carcere di Kaduna, dopo l'arresto motivato dalla sua adesione alla causa del Biafra durante la guerra civile nigeriana"*

[R 215]

The review is characterized by sentences such as *"Soyinka, grazie alla sua cultura cosmopolita, reinterpreta in modo personale la cosmologia yoruba"*

[R 215]

*"Thanks to his cosmopolitan culture, he reinterprets the Yoruba cosmology in a personal way"*

[R 215]

Such a sentence may be regarded as a pointer aimed at providing Italian readers with an indication that Wole Soyinka expresses himself in a notoriously 'difficult' literary style.

The review ends with a warning of the kind previously identified, aimed at illustrating the dangers of a simplistic interpretation:

*"Il critico occidentale, nell'avvicinarsi alla cultura africana, dovrebbe seguire l'esempio di realismo e storicità offerto da questo scrittore, evitando di fissare in immagini statiche e stereotipe una realtà che è dinamica e variegata, senza richiamarsi a un generico africanismo, che di fatto non è mai esistito, ma che rispecchia, invece, una mentalità ancora legata al colonialismo che Soyinka ha definito, con la sua consueta ironia, 'tarzanismo'"*

[R 215]

*"While approaching African culture, Western critics should follow the example of realism and historicity offered by Soyinka. They should avoid reducing a dynamic and varied reality to a series of static and stereotyped images. They should avoid references to a kind of generic*

*Africanism, something that has never existed in fact, and that reflects an attitude still linked with colonialism, an attitude that Soyinka, with his usual irony, defines as 'Tarzanism' "*

[R 215]

Since all the reviews so far analysed show the same patterns, a few more examples, taken from R 280 and R 279, in which Cristiana Pugliese introduces Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Chinua Achebe, should suffice to illustrate the thematic, and stylistic coherence of this reviewer.

In R 280, which is made up of an introductory review followed by a short story, for example, Ngugi's political commitment is explained by means of his own words (ie, extracts from an interview):

*"Io ho semplicemente deciso da che parte stare nella lotta di classe: ho deciso di scrivere, parlare, lavorare a favore dei contadini e dei lavoratori"*

[R 280]

*"I have simply decided on whose side I am in the class struggle: I have decided to write, speak and work in favour of peasants and workers"*

[R 280]

R 279 is also made up of two sections, an introductory review and a short story. In the introduction, the author introduces himself by means of another device: reported speech. Ibo culture is subsequently introduced by means of reader-friendly guidelines and background information, in the same way as was the case with Wole Soyinka and Amos Tutuola.

The first extract is an example of reported speech, a

device that allows the reviewer to 'disappear' and let the author speak:

*"Il compito dello scrittore, secondo Chinua Achebe, è quello di scrivere la storia del proprio popolo per recuperare quel passato e quei valori troppo a lungo negati"*

[R 279]

*"The writer's duty, according to Chinua Achebe, is to write the history of his own people, in order to recover the past and the values that have been too long denied"*

[R 279]

The conclusion aims at both further introducing Ibo culture, while dismantling what the reviewer perceives as a Western stereotype.

*"La cultura ibo è particolarmente ricca di proverbi, anche contrapposti tra loro, che esprimono la credenza nella dualità delle cose. Questa visione dialettica della vita incoraggia la tolleranza, la curiosità, la duttilità mentale. Non accetta principi generali o verità universali ed è l'espressione di una società democratica in netto contrasto con lo stereotipo occidentale della tribù africana sottomessa a capi potenti che obbediscono a dei assoluti"*

[R 279]

*"Ibo culture is particularly rich in proverbs, sometimes even in opposition to each other. They [the proverbs] express the Ibo belief in the duality of things. Such a dialectic vision of life encourages tolerance, curiosity and mental 'ductility'. It does not accept any general principles or universal truths and reflects a democratic society in marked contrast with the Western stereotype of the African tribe in submission to powerful chiefs who only obey absolute gods"*

[R 279]

The first part of the above extract contains a representation of Ibo culture, a culture that is characterized by otherness for European readers. The second part (in which the reviewer's presence becomes increasingly more apparent) contains a warning and an attempt to dismantle one more Western stereotype (that of the 'African tribe').

## Conclusion

Cristiana Pugliese's reviews of African literature that appeared in Il Manifesto between 1986 and 1988 represent an attempt to introduce African literature for the first time to Italian readers.

As far as the framework is concerned, most of her reviews seem to follow the same pattern. They are made up of at least two essential parts or sections: an introductory review and an extract (often a whole short story translated into Italian by the reviewer herself).

The reviews appear to be written in a style that may be defined 'reader-friendly' due to the lack of cryptic or technical literary terminology.

As regards Pugliese's recurrent themes, each review deals with an author and his own culture (introduced by means of guidelines and background information including warnings against the temptation of simplistic or exotic interpretations).

The purpose is to allow the reader both to bridge what the reviewer regards as the gap of otherness, and experience that otherness through a direct encounter with the author (in the extract, poem or short story that is an essential part of the review).



Finally, one essential aspect of Cristiana Pugliese's reviews is that she frequently attacks what she perceives as incorrect Western attitudes or stereotypes. This is the part of the review where the critic's presence may be perceived most clearly).

b) Chris Searle

The second 'regular' reviewer is Chris Searle who writes for the British Communist daily The Morning Star. Eleven reviews of African literature written by Chris Searle have been found in the period 1986-1990.

The authors reviewed include Njabulo Ndebele, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Waguih Ghali, Nawal El Saadawi, Ndeley Mokoso, Farida Karodia, Alex La Guma, Mandla Langa, Agnes Sam and Lina Magaia.

A look at the names of the authors reviewed points to the fact that most writers (the only exceptions perhaps being Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Nawal El Saadawi) do not appear to have been reviewed by any of the other British newspapers analysed in the same period.

Moreover, one notices the absence of the 'giants' of African literature: Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe, Amos Tutuola, Naguib Mahfouz, Tahar Ben Jelloun, John Michael Coetzee and Nadine Gordimer.

As in the case of Cristiana Pugliese's reviewing, there are no White South African authors. Furthermore, no reference to the Nobel Prize can be found in Chris Searle's reviews.

The authors seem to be chosen mainly on the basis of their ideological commitment, rather than their purely literary or artistic qualities. In addition, on the basis

of a comparison with Pugliese's reviews, the (local African) cultures Searle's writers belong to are far less relevant than the rôle and position of each author in a struggle (class-struggle, anti-imperialist struggle, anti-neocolonialist struggle).

A look at some of the titles (of the reviews) should suffice to prove this point: "South Africa's workers in struggle for liberation" (Njabulo Ndebele), "Class suicide in Egypt" (Waguhi Ghali), "Short sketches of injustice and resistance" (Nawal El Saadawi), "Three books from the heart of the apartheid state" (Farida Karodia), "Symbolising the real strength of solidarity" (Alex La Guma), "A search for truth and justice" (Ngugi wa Thiong'o) and, finally, "Tales of true terror from Mozambique" (Lina Magaia).

The above review titles contain all the key words that characterize Chris Searle's reviewing style and that point to his typical themes: 'workers', 'struggle', 'liberation', 'class', 'injustice', 'resistance', 'apartheid', 'solidarity', 'justice', 'terror', etc.

Most reviews are of medium length (300-400 words). They are long in comparison with the short reviews that regularly appear in the 'new fiction' section, or short in comparison with Cristiana Pugliese's reviews that have just been analysed.

Chris Searle's style and technique also seem to be uniform and coherent. The authors and books reviewed are always introduced as active and committed participants in the class/anti-imperialist struggle. This introduction often takes place by means of explanations of an almost didactic kind. The explanations are usually supported by quotations. Moreover, very few references to the literary qualities of their books, or to the local cultures to which they belong, are included in the reviews.

This points to the fact that this kind of interpretation (that perhaps might be regarded as a kind of 'restricted' interpretation by those critics who are more concerned with the cultural and/or artistic aspects of a work), sees no major problem of 'cultural' otherness.

In other words, the risk of cultural misinterpretation appears to be less important than the stress on the revolutionary aspect of the work.

Reading Chris Searle's reviews, the impression is given that there is no cultural gap to be bridged (the only gap being a class gap), and that no domestication or familiarization technique is therefore required. In other words, there appears to be no otherness, or if there is otherness, that otherness is the common 'enemy', since both the African writer and the European reader of The Morning Star are supposed to be fighting together against the same 'global' enemy: imperialism.

Chris Searle's reviews represent strictly Marxist criticism, at least in comparison with other reviewers, and such a claim appears to be confirmed by the following extracts from R 191:

*"As the struggle for national liberation intensifies in South Africa, it is becoming more and more clear that the culture integral in that struggle is taking on new resonances"*

[...]

*"There is something of the muscle of Gorky in Ndebele, but much more of himself and the huge and throbbing tissue of his people"*

[...]

*"Read both these books, they are eloquent commentary on the growing waves of a people's heroic struggle"*

[R 191]

Searle's reviews start and end with a reference to a struggle. Literature is seen as a product of a community/society rather than an 'author' (ie, in the sense pointed to by Ngugi wa Thiong'o in Decolonising the Mind).

Significantly, this review [R 191] contains the only literary reference (to Gorky, one of the founders of social realism, through his depiction of the outcasts of society) that has been found in all Searle's reviews analysed.

The conclusion, moreover, contains a guideline that illustrates the aim of reviewing (as well as reading) according to the critic: literature is regarded as a commentary on a struggle.

The second review, R 192, in terms of style, technique and content, is very similar to R 191. It is a review of Ngugi wa Thiong'o's Decolonising the Mind.

*"Ngugi's main objective is to work towards the creation of a 'universal language of struggle' as a tool to help defeat imperialism and neocolonialism [...] and to see language itself defeated as a servant of imperialism" [...]*

*"Thus Ngugi has written a deeply educative book about language itself, and in doing so is urging all of us to analyse and re-examine our own [language]" [...]*

*"If we begin to do this, as British people, it will not take us long to conclude how much through our history we have assumed the omnipotence of our own language, and how little we have been exposed to learning, understanding, and taking value of those of other peoples" [...]*

*"That understanding is in itself a challenge to our internationalism, as well as a reminder of how much we need to, in the words of Ngugi, 'enhance the art of translation' to comprehend with much more fullness the struggles and lives of those who speak their languages anywhere in the world"*

[R 192]

The above extracts are aimed at illustrating Chris Searle's typical way of introducing books and authors in his reviews. This is done mainly by means of explanations of a didactic kind ( *'Ngugi has written a deeply educative book....' 'If we begin to do this...' or 'a reminder of how much we need to, in the words of Ngugi, "enhance the art of translation"'* ).

R 192 also contains a reference to cultural otherness ( *'how much through our history we have assumed the omnipotence of our own language, and how little we have been exposed to learning, understanding, and taking value of those of other peoples'[sic]* ) and to the importance of enhancing the art of translation.

However, both references are subsequently provided with what might be regarded as a restrictive interpretation: in fact, they are aimed at helping readers understand *'with much more fullness'* the STRUGGLES and lives of others. A culture therefore appears to be regarded merely in terms of its struggle. This may be compared with other approaches to cultural otherness (dealt with in Chapter Six) which have shown to be wider-ranging in the sense that a culture was represented as more than a struggle.

R 145 deals with Beer in the Snooker Club by Waguih Ghali. The two extracts (they can be found at the beginning and the conclusion of the review) will illustrate, once more, the coherence of Chris Searle's reviewing style, especially concerning the thematic content.

*"First published in 1964, Waguiah Ghaly's novel of Nasser's Egypt remains on its republication as haunting a statement of cultural alienation as it did during those years following the Suez fiasco".*

*[...]*

*"'Beer in the Snooker Club' is an important novel with a relevance that stretches well beyond its original time and place. For it expresses the dilemmas surrounding 'class suicide' and the choices facing the radical yet well-heeled intellectuals on the fringes of commitment to fundamental struggle and change"*

*[R 145]*

The beginning of the review shows how Chris Searle tends to immediately contextualize a book or an author in terms of historical/social/political reality: Egypt after the Suez fiasco.

The conclusion, on the other hand, shows how capable he is of extending the meaning of a particular book to all other similar situations worldwide. The Catholic press, as the extracts analysed in Chapter Six have pointed out, would probably speak of a kind of 'universal tragedy of brothers against brothers'. Chris Searle, from his distinctly left-wing ideological viewpoint, refers to exactly the same situation by means of an altogether different vocabulary.

This point is further illustrated by R 97 in which he says that Nawal El Saadawi's newly translated collection of short stories *"finds its unifying theme in the relationship it draws between economic, political and sexual oppression"*. And he adds that *"Yet behind the issues of sexuality are the frustrations of living in an unjust society rooted in a neo-colonial economy, where women face a life of toil and humiliation"* [R 97]

### Conclusion

One can conclude this analysis of the style, technique and themes of Chris Searle's reviews in The Morning Star by saying that there appears to be a high degree of coherence and uniformity in his discourse on African literature.

As far as the framework is concerned, Chris Searle's reviews tend to be of medium length (300-400 words, ie short in comparison with Cristiana Pugliese's reviews and long if compared with reviews in the 'new fiction' sections). The most frequently adopted speech act is the didactic explanation (the message seems to be 'this book teaches us that...'), often accompanied by a guideline provided in the form of an entreaty (such as 'you should read this book, because ...'). The reviewer' therefore represents the dominant voice.

His reviews are also characterized by a series of key-words (such as 'struggle' for instance). In addition, the reviewer frequently resorts to a number of quotations, carefully selected in order to illustrate certain points, all related to the dominant theme: the anti-imperialist struggle.



African literature is not introduced as something aimed at allowing European readers to encounter 'otherness' (ie, the otherness of a local African culture), but as something that should strengthen the readers' awareness of a reality they are supposed to be already familiar with (ie, the worldwide struggle against imperialism).

Clearly, Marxist criticism (like other kinds or schools of literary criticism) has an important part to play in the joint social literary operation. However, like all other types of critical discourse, it may become predictable and restrictive in its interpretation of books.

A too dogmatic approach (ie, reducing all aspects of a book to its rôle in the struggle against oppression) may involve the risk of ignoring or even denying certain aspects of literature that may be equally relevant in the creation of a new awareness amongst readers.

### c) Tahar Ben Jelloun

Tahar Ben Jelloun has been working as a regular reviewer for Le Monde at least since 1983. Ten reviews of African literature written by him have been found in the period 1983-1989.

Ben Jelloun has reviewed: Abdelhak Serhane, Mohammed Khaïr-Eddine, Gamal Ghitany, Assia Djebar, Mohammed Dib, Fawzi Mellah, Tahar Djaout, Rachid Mimouni.

All his authors come from North Africa. With the single exception of Gamal Ghitany (who is Egyptian), all the others are authors of mainly French but sometimes Arabic expression, coming from the three Maghreb countries (ie, Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia, former French colonies).

The fact that Tahar Ben Jelloun himself comes from Morocco (although he has lived in France for several years) makes him an 'insider' in reviewing North African literature. In terms of otherness, unlike most other reviewers who belong to the readers' culture (in fact, most of the reviewers encountered in this research are Western Europeans), Tahar Ben Jelloun may claim to feel at home in both North African and Western European culture.

Moreover, as the statistical analysis has shown in Chapter Two he is one of the authors most frequently and regularly reviewed by the newspapers analysed in this piece of research. The fact that he was awarded the Prix Goncourt may have helped him achieve 'European writer' status.

These aspects of his persona add credibility (from the reviewer's as well as the newspaper's viewpoint) to his rôle as a critic of mainly North African literature.

As far as the structure and the related thematic content are concerned, an analysis of the reviews written by Tahar Ben Jelloun points to the absence of a rigid or regularly adopted framework and to the presence of recurring themes.

However, he often starts by introducing the author and the country he belongs to. He then moves on to provide a description that often contains a detailed summary of the plot, enriched with quotations and further explanations of the culture. This may be regarded as the part in which the reviewer tackles the issue of the familiarization or domestication of otherness. Finally, his conclusive part of a review often contains a comment on the book or author.

His reviews therefore consist of a blend of three types of reviewing approaches: an introduction to the author, a description of the book and a comment.

Being an intellectual with first-hand knowledge of life in the Maghreb countries, he often includes explanations of the kind 'In Morocco....'. The expression of his first-hand experience may be regarded as one of his themes.

Most of Tahar Ben Jelloun's reviews are written using a vocabulary that appears to be reader-friendly (lack of technical terminology). However, as in the case of Chris Searle's reviews, one can detect certain key-words: 'mémoire', 'mort', 'exil', 'malédiction', 'rêves', 'souvenir', 'hante', 'solitude', 'troubler', etc.

The above terms point to the themes most frequently tackled by Tahar Ben Jelloun in his reviews. He tends to analyse books in terms of strictly personal searches (ie, subjective, highly emotional itineraries followed by the authors/characters).

The book reviewed is not seen as the product of a community (as in Chris Searle's case) but as the product of an author, or rather an Author (meant as a creator invested with a kind of divine power, the definition of an author inherited by the Romantic tradition).

This is exactly the kind of reviewing some critics, such as Frank Kermode (as pointed out in Chapter One) would like to see 'demythologized' so as to enable newspaper reviewing to fulfil what is regarded as its own social purpose.

Moreover, Tahar Ben Jelloun's relationship with books may be regarded as more directly associated with market or corporate pressures than Pugliese's for instance, as all the books he reviews are new publications.

There follow some examples of typical features of Tahar Ben Jelloun's reviewing style. The first one is taken from R 255 in which he reviews Messaouda by Abdelhak Serhane.

*"Abdelhak Serhane vient de consigner dans ce premier roman la brutalité dont il fut témoin"*

*"With his first novel, Abdelhak Serhane has just 'delivered' the brutality he witnessed"*

[R 255]

This extract, the key-word being 'witnessed'/'témoin', shows that the author is perceived as a witness/'témoin' of a personal experience.

The following extracts are taken from R 247, in which Légende et vie d'Agoun'chich, by Mohammed Khaïr-Eddine is reviewed.

*"La poésie de ce homme - forte, puissante, enracinée dans la terre de ses ancêtres..."*

[...]

*"Au Maroc, comme un peu partout dans le tiers-monde, l'écrivain est sommé de choisir son camp. Mohammed Khaïr-Eddine a choisi le sien: l'écriture"*

[R 247]

*"His poetry [is] strong, powerful, rooted in the land of his ancestors"*

[...]

*"In Morocco, as in most Third-World countries, the writer is called to choose on whose side to be: Mohammed Khaïr-Eddine has made his own choice: literature."*

[R 247]

The first sentence shows another one of Tahar Ben Jelloun's favourite themes: 'roots'. A book seems to be perceived as a personal experience and also as a way of exploring one's own roots, one's own past. In the case of most of the authors reviewed by Tahar Ben Jelloun, it is a past inevitably made up of references to French colonialism and Arab/Islamic history.

The second extract above aims at illustrating the typical kind of explanation that allows Tahar Ben Jelloun to express his own first-hand experience and knowledge of the North African culture: "In Morocco,...".

The final paragraph of R 247 shows a typical description of the plot, followed by a conclusive comment.

*"Et la légende d'Agoun'chich s'arrêta le jour où il enterra ses armes et s'engouffra dans la foule casablancaise. Mieux qu'un roman d'aventure, 'Légende et vie d'Agoun'chich' est une superbe parabole"*

[R.247]

*"'The legend of Agoun'chich' ends the day he buried his weapons and was swallowed by the crowd in Casablanca. It is more than an adventure novel, 'La vie d'Agoun'chich' is a splendid parable"*

[R 247]

The following extracts, taken from R 225, in which he reviews Zayni Barakat by the Egyptian writer Gamal Ghitany, show how he is also capable of including references to the political situation (especially if they are part of the author's experience or the plot) as well as literary references to Western culture.

*"Gamal Ghitany, soupçonné d'être marxiste, a été emprisonné quelques mois en 1966. Comme certains intellectuels de sa génération, il a vécu dans la hantise d'être privé de liberté"*

[...]

*"Hélas, le roman de Ghitani est terriblement actuel, même si beaucoup d'éléments historiques appartiennent plus précisément à l'époque de l'Egypte des Mamelouks"*

[...]

*"Gamal Ghitany serait un Orwell arabe [reference to 1984] qui scrute le passé pour témoigner sur le présent et*

*l'avenir. Roman d'une facture parfaite, ce livre renoue avec le patrimoine des lettres arabes où le récit est tantôt une chronique, tantôt une épopée (malhama), tantôt une séance (maqama). Tous les genres se mêlent dans ce livre riche et complexe comme une vieille capitale"*

[R 225]

*"Gamal Ghitany, suspected of being a Marxist, was imprisoned for a few months in 1966. Like some other intellectuals of his generation, he experienced the loss of freedom"*

[...]

The first extract shows the way references to political events are mainly perceived as part of a personal experience. This is the opposite of what Chris Searle would have done, for instance. Chris Searle, would have started with the struggle and only subsequently would he have mentioned the author or the character of the book.

R 225 goes on:

*"Unfortunately, Ghitany's novel is terribly topical, even though many of its historical elements belong to Egypt at the time of the Mamelukes"*

[...]

The above extract shows Tahar Ben Jelloun's way of describing the 'value' of a book in terms of topicality. Again, a comparison with Chris Searle's reviews would make Tahar Ben Jelloun's way sound too 'gentle' and 'mild'. Chris Searle, in fact, would have used words such as 'subversive', 'struggle', etc.

Tahar Ben Jelloun, therefore, might be regarded as a reviewer who represents a mid-position half-way between Chris Searle and L'Osservatore Romano. The latter might

well have used words such as 'tragedy', 'brotherhood', 'universality', etc., in order to represent the same situation.

The last paragraph shows how Tahar Ben Jelloun often resorts to a parallel set of references (Arab and Western culture), an element that points to his own status as someone perfectly at ease with both cultures, someone who has assimilated both cultures through his personal experience.

*"Gamal Ghitany seems to be an Arab Orwell who looks to the past in order to witness the present or the future.[...]This perfectly written novel goes back to the tradition of Arabic literature in which a story could be either a chronicle (malhama) or a session (maqama). All genres are blended in this book, rich and complex like an ancient capital"*

[R 225]

R 228 (in which he deals with Assia Djebar's L'Amour, la Fantasia) provides an example of all the most typical features of his reviewing style.

- his stock themes: the book perceived as a personal search for one's own past and roots through the power of memory;

- the first-hand explanations of the North African culture and society.

*"En cherchant dans le passé, elle découvre que la langue française qu'elle écrit est entachée de sang"*

*"Searching the past she discovers that the French language she uses is stained with blood"*

[R 228]



This also illustrates Tahar Ben Jelloun's indirect way (ie, by means of literary images like that of the language stained with blood) of referring to colonialism.

*"La mémoire d'Assia Djébar est habitée par un double ossuaire"*

*"Assia Djébar's memory is inhabited by a double ossuary"*

[R 228]

The two key-words 'memory' and 'death' point to one of Ben Jelloun's main themes: the past (romantically) regarded as death carried by memory.

Finally, Tahar Ben Jelloun's typical explanation offered as the expression of first-hand experience:

*"Dans la société maghrébine traditionnelle, l'homme ne nomme jamais son épouse. Il évoque la femme et les enfants par un euphémisme, 'la maison' "*

*"In the traditional Maghrebi society, a man never refers to his wife by using the word 'wife'. He rather evokes her and the children by means of an euphemism: 'la maison' "*

[R 228]

### Conclusion

Having analysed a number of Tahar Ben Jelloun's reviews that are representative of his style, technique and stock themes, it is possible to say that his method of reviewing, like the others analysed before (Cristiana Pugliese and Chris Searle), is characterized by typical features and a strong sense of coherence.

As far as the structure is concerned, however, a comparison with the other two regular reviewers (Pugliese and Searle) shows that Tahar Ben Jelloun's reviews have much less of a recurring framework, his reviews being characterized by a blend of thematic elements presented in a varied order.

Tahar Ben Jelloun has his own particular way of dealing with otherness and helping readers in their interpretation of books coming from the Maghreb countries.

His reviews include three main kind of reviewing approaches blended in different ways:

- an introduction to the book/author;
- frequently detailed descriptions of the plot;
- a personal comment on the book.

The reviews also contain further explanations referring to the 'other' cultures, often offered as the expression of the reviewer's first-hand experience.

These reviewing approaches may be regarded as the carriers of Tahar Ben Jelloun's main themes:

- literature regarded as the expression of personal searches, ie emotional itineraries followed by authors/characters;
- books as ways of exploring the authors/characters' roots;
- the past seen as death carried by memory, or rather evoked by the power of memory.

Tahar Ben Jelloun's stress on the search for (or the evocation of) a generally 'dreadful' past, however, allows him to include historical and/or ideological references (to French colonialism or the Middle Eastern conflicts for instance) in his reviews.

### Overall conclusion

This chapter discussed the stock themes and the reviewing style and technique of a number of regular contributors.

The number of reviews available for each critic (25 in the case of Cristiana Pugliese in Il Manifesto, 11 for Chris Searle in The Morning Star and, finally, 10 for Tahar Ben Jelloun in Le Monde) allows a description of each reviewer's personal discourse on African literature.

As was stated in Chapter Two (Section Two), regular reviewing provides critics with an opportunity to develop a whole personal and coherent discourse on African literature. Sometimes, as in the case of Cristiana Pugliese, the reviews, taken as a whole, may be read as a compact text that may be regarded as an introduction to African literature. Chris Searle and Tahar Ben Jelloun's reviews, in comparison with Cristiana Pugliese's reviews, have much less of an introductory flavour. This is mainly due to the fact that their reviews of African literature appear in countries where African literature is not regarded as a comparatively 'new' field of interest as far as newspaper readers are concerned.

In the present discussion, different, personal ways of reviewing have emerged, together with the fact that each

critic tends to have a set of favourite stock themes (identified by means of of key-words and literary/ideological references).

Moreover, each reviewer has been shown to give priority to books coming from certain parts of Africa. This appears to be based on personal interests (in the case of Cristiana Pugliese and Tahar Ben Jelloun) as well as on ideology (particularly evident in the case of Chris Searle, but also in Cristiana Pugliese's choice not to review any books of White South African literature).

Finally, each method of reviewing is characterized by coherence and by an effort to provide readers with guidelines aimed at helping them decode the books in what each reviewer perceives as a 'correct' way.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### AN ANALYSIS OF SHORT REVIEWS (REVIEWING AS CULTURAL 'FAST-FOOD')

#### Introduction

This chapter will analyse a number of those very short reviews that do not usually exceed 150 words. Due to both their length and the related notion of (perhaps interchangeable) literary clichés and stereotype images, these reviews have often been referred to as 'cultural fast-food' in the course of this piece of research.

As was mentioned in Chapter Five - the chapter dealing with the aims of reviewing - this type of very short review is typical of a number of British newspapers, especially of the 'new fiction' section of their literary pages.

In Chapter Five it was pointed out that this type of reviewing suggests that newspaper reviews may be regarded as a product meant for quick consumption (unlike academic criticism, for instance), hence the characterization of 'cultural fast-food'.

The examples provided in Chapter Five (taken from R 141, R 136 and R 36) suggested that 'the use of adjectives probably represents one of the most prominent features of this type of reviewing'.

The books analysed in those reviews were often defined (ie represented) by means of adjectives such as 'authentic', 'unique', 'magical', 'amusing', 'haunting'. These adjectives were used in a general way. Consequently, a suggestion was made that they could therefore be applied to more than one book, once the reviewer had made up his mind as to whether he intended to celebrate (ie to recommend) or to attack the books.

As was concluded in Chapter Five, 'these reviews very often only seem to fulfil one aim: commoditising literature and responding to market pressures'.

This chapter aims at analysing a number of short reviews. In view of the length of the reviews, instead of extracts, whole reviews will be reproduced.

There follows a list of the reviews, taken from The Guardian and The Daily/Sunday Telegraph, discussed in the present chapter:

<u>Ref.</u>	<u>Paper</u>	<u>Author</u>	<u>Book</u>
R 80	DTele	N El Saadawi	<u>She Has No Place in Paradise</u>
R 83	"	A Djebbar	<u>A Sister to Scheherazade</u>
R 84	"	B Okri	<u>Stars of the New Curfew</u>
R 89	Gua	A Djebbar	<u>A Sister to Scheherazade</u>
R 136	DTele	A Tutuola	<u>Pauper Brawler and Slanderer</u>
R 142	Gua	C Achebe	<u>Anthills of the Savannah</u>
R 180	STele	B Okri	<u>Incidents at the Shrine</u>
R 183	"	A Serhane	<u>Messaouda</u>
R 185	Gua	B Okri	<u>Incidents at the Shrine</u>
R 189	"	A Serhane	<u>Messaouda</u>
R 259	"	B Emecheta	<u>Destination Biafra</u>
R 261	"	B Okri	<u>The Landscapes Within</u>

The 12 reviews (6 taken from The Guardian and 6 from The Daily/Sunday Telegraph) deal with a number of authors that may be regarded as representative of all geographic

areas of African literature: 4 from North Africa (3 women and one man), 7 from Subsaharan Africa (3 men and 1 woman) and 1 from White South Africa (a woman).

Moreover, in the case of some authors (Assia Djebar, Abdelhak Serhane, Ben Okri) more than one review is available, dealing with the same book or author.

The reviews are discussed in comparison with the other reviews analysed in the previous chapters. In order to do this, the reviews form the subject of a structural and thematic analysis based on the aspects of reviewing discussed in Chapters Four to Seven.

Finally, some conclusions concerning this particular kind of reviewing will be drawn from the data and the related notions of literary clichés and stereotype images will be further considered.

The reference to literary clichés and stereotype images is due to the fact that the domestication approach most often adopted by reviewers in the case of short reviews - as will be demonstrated in this chapter - is the one that was referred to as the 'exotic other' approach in Chapter Six.

The exotic other approach results from a denial of coevalness (between the author's culture and the reviewer's culture) and its main feature is the presence of (recurring) frozen images of Africa.

In this chapter, recurring key-words and images, such as 'vivid', 'vibrant', 'kaleidoscopic', 'colourful' etc., congregate around an underlying cliché and are regarded as stereotype images simply on the basis of their common occurrence.

These semantic oppositions - as will be shown in the analysis of several short reviews - take part in the



creation of cultural distance between the reviewer's culture (the Western, civilized, rational, safe world) and Africa (depicted as uncivilized, irrational, dangerous etc).

### An analysis of 12 reviews

As far as the structural and thematic analysis is concerned, most reviews appear to be made up of a combination of three elements:

- a lead-in, in which the book is introduced. This is where a series of adjectives and key-words may be singled out. These key-words often set the tone of the whole review (by providing a number of key semantic oppositions);
- a description of the plot or what are regarded as the main themes and/or incidents of the story;
- a (generally conclusive) quality remark which is the expression of the reviewer's personal opinion.

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R 80, (The Daily Telegraph)

N. El Saadawi, She Has No Place in Paradise

*"The individual suddenly defeated by life is more often than not at the centre of Nawal El Saadawi's stories, 'She Has No Place in Paradise', translated by Shirley Eber. More often than not the individual is a man. The writer, an Egyptian who once held high office and was*

later imprisoned in that country, writes of women mainly as victims. Women in two of the stories catch their husbands in flagrante delicto, while others have never seen their husbands naked nor had the slightest enjoyment from sexual relations. But, finally, it is the men who suffer most.

In 'The Square' an official is inexplicably thrown into jail, leaving behind his wife, son, a pleasant home and a good job. The story is related in a manner worthy of Kafka, all the man's concentration being involved in fitting himself into the small square afforded him in prison for sleeping. Amazingly, the ending has a tiny note of hope" [R 80]

R 80 is made up of about 160 words. The dominant voice is the reviewer's and no quotations from the stories can be found. The reviewer appears to give priority to a brief summary of the plot and to the introduction of some of the author's favourite themes.

The text is therefore characterized by mainly descriptive sentences such as 'she [ie Nawal El Saadawi] writes of ...' or '... is at the centre of the author's stories'.

The book is also represented by means of an overt literary reference to Western literature, a parallel with Kafka in particular: 'the story is related in a manner worthy of Kafka'.

The review is based on three main semantic oppositions: the generic vs the specific, men vs women, victims and suffering vs hope.

The lead-in ('The individual suddenly defeated [...] women mainly as victims') presents the opposition men/women inside a framework of a generic suffering. The key-words are: 'individual', 'man', 'women', 'defeated', 'victims'.

The central part of the review ('Women in two of the stories etc') relates the plots of two of the stories, thus providing two specific examples of the generalities presented in the lead-in. The key semantic oppositions are: women/men and husband/wife.

The review ends with some quality remarks. The expression of the reviewer's personal opinion is apparent in sentences such as: 'the story is related in a manner worthy of Kafka' and 'Amazingly, etc.'

Finally, to further prove the internal (both structural and thematic) coherence that characterized the review, the conclusive reference to 'hope' may be regarded as semantically opposed to the introductory 'mood' of the review, characterized by 'suffering'.

\*\*\*

R 83 (The Daily Telegraph)

A. Djébar, A Sister to Scheherazade

*"'A Sister to Scheherazade' is not an easy read - Djébar's writing is densely poetic and her narrative leaps can confuse - but is an arresting one. She paints a vivid portrait of the strange, time-lapse world of the harem, a far cry from the saucy images drawn from Hollywood and the Carry On team.*

*Her contrast of Isma and Hajila's marriages nimbly illustrates the extremes of eroticism and cruelty that Arabic culture is capable of producing. With the understanding of one who has lived in both the male and female Muslim worlds, she sees both the beauties and the absurdities of a culture where the word for new wife (as opposed to first one) is the same as that for wound". [R*

This text is made up of about 120 words. Unlike the previous review, the critic (who still remains the dominant voice) gives priority to his own personal comment and judgement of the book: 'it is an arresting book'.

There is no emphasis on the plot but on the author's commitment and to the Muslim culture: the way Assia Djebar depicts the Arab world is regarded as 'a far cry from the saucy images drawn from Hollywood'. The very last sentence also contains a reference to the Arab culture: 'a culture where the word for new wife etc.'

No quotations can be found in the review and mainly descriptive sentences are used: 'she paints a vivid portrait of...'. Another typical sentence is characterized by the simple structure: subject + copula (the books is ...).

However, this text also contains a number of what have already been described as literary clichés and stereotype images. The book is described as 'arresting' and the portrait she paints is described as 'vivid'.

As far as the structural and thematic aspects of R 83 are concerned, a comparison with the review previously analysed shows that in R 83 there is no clear borderline between lead-in, plot/themes and comments. In R 83 the reviewer's quality remarks and the presentation of themes and plot are intermingled throughout the review.

The first sentence (the lead-in), for instance, includes the reviewer's quality remarks: 'not an easy read', 'densely poetic', 'arresting'. The following sentence introduces a reference to the plot: 'she paints a vivid portrait of etc', although the adjective 'vivid', again,

represents a quality remark by the reviewer. This also applies to the adjectives 'strange and time-lapse' as well as to the reference to 'Hollywood and the Carry On team'.

The semantic oppositions that represent the basis for the review are: exoticism vs familiar. The exoticism of the book is linked to words such as 'confusing', 'arresting', 'strange', 'time-lapse', 'eroticism', 'cruelty', 'beauties' and 'absurdities'. The familiar, on the other hand, is introduced by 'Hollywood' and the opposition male vs female.

\*\*\*

R 84 (The Daily Telegraph)

B. Okri, Stars of the New Curfew

*"The stylistic terseness of 'Stars of the New Curfew' belies the kaleidoscopic richness of its material and contributes greatly to its febrile monotony. Toying with ideas of allegory, these nightmarish short-stories of modern Nigeria identify the psychology of ritual terror as an atavistic stew of sorcery and quackery.*

*Ben Okri's English is suitably exotic: 'watch-nights' prove to be nightwatchmen rather than religious services; citizens are 'roughened up' by soldiers; a girl's eyes 'glowed like that of a cat'. One more eye, you think, might have overloaded the Kaleidoscope." [R 84]*

R 84 is one of the shortest reviews as well as one of the few reviews not in favour of the book reviewed. It consists of 90 words only. The reviewer, once again, the dominant voice, concentrates on the expression of his own personal judgement.

As far as the structural and thematic aspects are concerned, the lead-in is entirely made up of a quality remark. The rest of the review is also predominantly made up of remarks on quality, the only direct reference to the book being 'nightmarish short stories of modern Nigeria', in which the adjective 'nightmarish' represents one more quality remark.

The whole review may be regarded as a text in which the reviewer provides readers with a personal opinion according to which the book may be read as an allegory of modern Nigeria. A number of stereotype images of African literature can be singled out in the review.

Collocations such as 'kaleidoscopic richness', 'nightmarish short-stories (implying irrationality)', 'febrile monotony', 'ritual terror' and 'atavistic stew' (all related to images of messy, feverish, tribal/primitive society), and words such as 'sorcery' or 'quackery' all refer to 'exotic' representations of African literature (discussed in Chapter Six), characterized by frozen images resulting from a denial of coevalness between the culture of the book and that to which the reviewer belongs.

The reviewer's position may be described referring, once again, to Johannes Fabian's diagram that represents the civilized Western metropolis as the reassuring centre from where the reviewer depicts 'other' realities. The first paragraph of the review is entirely based on the opposition between a civilized West and a primitive Africa.

The second and final paragraph, however, is characterized by a completely different 'mood', though the reviewer maintains the assumption that the opposition 'West vs Africa' equals the opposition

'civilized world vs primitive world'.

The reviewer appears to be 'sneering' at the African writer. Ben Okri's English style is described as 'suitably exotic' in which the word 'exotic' subsequently clearly implies 'incorrect'.

To demonstrate this, the reviewer provides two examples of what he perceives as exotic usage of English: 'roughened up' ('roughed up' being the 'correct' expression) and 'a girl's eyes glowed like that of a cat' ('those of a cat' being the correct sentence). As a result, the 'kaleidoscopic richness' of the narrative material implies 'incorrect English'.

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R 89 (The Guardian)

A. Djebbar, A Sister to Scheherazade

*"[...] The kindest thing I can say about the rest of this week's fiction is that it is always difficult to judge work which remains totally locked in some foreign culture. Assia Djebbar's A Sister to Scheherazade, translated from the French by Dorothy S. Blair, concerns itself with two women, Isma and Hajila, wives of the same man, telling their stories as a sort of exposé of the oppression suffered by women in North Africa. Without some knowledge of contemporary Algerian society, this is an impenetrable tale, though the author does have a sharp visual sense (she is a film-maker as well) and the book's successes are matters of light and dark described rather than the Maghribi woman's difficulties made comprehensible to outsiders." [R 89]*

This review consists of about 120 words. The dominant



voice belongs to the reviewer and no quotations are to be found.

Structurally, the text is divided into three parts: a lead-in, made up of a quality remark (the first sentence), a brief description of the plot (second sentence) and the expression of the critic's quality remarks (third and final sentence).

The critic's personal opinion is expressed by means of a frank admission in the lead-in : 'it is always difficult to judge work which remains totally locked in some foreign culture', followed by a repetition of the same statement in the final sentence: 'this is an impenetrable tale'. Both sentences stress the fact that the reviewer is aware of the difficulties of representing otherness.

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R 136 (The Daily Telegraph)

A. Tutuola, Pauper, Brawler and Slanderer

*"The blend of the fantastic and the everyday in Amos Tutuola's Pauper, Brawler and Slanderer (Faber £ 9.95, £ 3.95) is on the level of folk-tale or the peasant pictures of Brueghel. The setting is Nigeria, the period any time in the last millennium, the title-characters a trio of tricksters whose picaresque careers take them from the bottom to the top of Yoruba society and culminate in nothing less than apotheosis: they vanish like puffs of smoke.*

*Mr Tutuola uses a literary equivalent of the sing-song cadences of African oral story-telling to unique and magical effect."* [R 136]

R 136 is made up of about 100 words. It contains no quotations and the reviewer is the dominant voice.

As in the case of the previous review, three parts may be identified: a lead-in, including a quality remark (first sentence), a reference to the plot (second sentence) and, finally, a quality remark in the third sentence.

Comments are sustained by references to Western art ('Brueghel') and are characterized by a number of literary clichés such as 'to unique and magical effect', or 'a blend of fantastic and the everyday'.

Again, there are a number of terms that may be regarded as part of a semantic opposition that recurs in the reviewing of African literature. The word 'blend', to start with, is linked with the image of 'stew' (already identified in R 84: 'atavistic stew'), conveying the idea of mess/confusion/mixture.

The other key-words are: 'fantastic', 'folktale', 'sing song cadences', 'unique' and 'magical'. They may be regarded as opposite to words such as 'ordinary', 'rational', 'civilized' and all the other terms that point to an opposition between a civilized and comprehensible Western society and a primitive African society.

\*\*\*

R 142 (The Guardian)

C. Achebe, Anthills of the Savannah

*"Witches aren't the only lonely ones. A dictator must get the same twinges, presiding over a cabinet where the 'first among equals' is so much more patently first than equal. Chinua Achebe's chilling and sardonic Anthills of*

*the Savannah gives us the rise and (mercifully) the fall of an ex-Sandhurst colonel who becomes head of an African state following an army coup. He is viewed from various points of his mostly obsequious entourage and the picture steadily deteriorates.*

*As in Achebe's earlier books there are strong resonances of the tribal past, but neither proverbial wisdom nor the sycophancy of his boyhood friends - all but two, and they die for it - saves this tyrant from his loneliness or his country from its consequences.*

*No wonder the people of Kangan, natural satirists, are 'famous for dancing in the street at every change of government'" [R 142]*

This text consists of about 140 words. The reviewer is the dominant voice, although he resorts to the use of some quotations in order to further illustrate the plot.

The reviewer gives priority to the plot and the review may be regarded mainly as a summary. However, the reviewer's personal quality remarks may be detected both in the lead-in (first two sentences) and in the second and third paragraphs.

The key-words that represent the basis of the review may be read, once again, as part of semantic oppositions between the West and the African continent regarded as primitive and irrational and represented by means of references to political instability ('dictator', 'army coup'), and lack of development/civilization ('tribal past', 'proverbial wisdom', people 'dancing in the street', witchcraft and 'loneliness').

However, in this case, the reviewer is probably resorting to these semantic oppositions because the author himself has already used them in his sardonic construction of the image of Africa.

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R 180 (The Sunday Telegraph)

B. Okri, Incidents at the Shrine

*"Incidents at the Shrine offers a fascinating picture of the vibrant, loud and brutal world of the Nigerian village. Writing with an effective simplicity, Mr Okri examines the potent forces of magic, superstition and the brutality of war.*

*There is a coarse amusement, as Agodi, an unsuccessful trader, is hurled bodily into the suppurating carcass of a cow: and horror as children wait for their parents to collect them from a school abandoned in the terror of war. These stories abound with life and mark Mr Okri as a writer of abundant promise."* [R 180]

R 180 is one of the shortest reviews. It consists of just over 90 words. The dominant voice is the reviewer and there is no room for quotations.

Most of the sentences are of a descriptive kind: 'writing with simplicity', 'he examines the potent forces of magic', 'there is a coarse amusement...'.

The dominant mood would appear to be celebratory. This is illustrated by sentences such as 'it offers a fascinating picture of...', 'these stories mark Mr Okri as a writer of abundant promise' ecc.

The above celebratory sentences are characterized by a number of (possibly interchangeable) literary clichés such as 'a fascinating picture', 'writer of abundant promise'. However, more clichés and stereotype images may be identified in the review: 'writing with effective simplicity' for instance.

The lead-in (first paragraph) contains a series of quality remarks. It is followed by a summary of the plot (first sentence of second paragraph) and by a final quality remark.

The lead-in + plot/themes + quality remark pattern therefore appears to be adopted with regularity in this type of reviewing.

In the case of R 180, in the lead-in the book is introduced by means of a series of key-words that tend to be used in a general way: ('a fascinating picture of the vibrant, loud and brutal world of the Nigerian village', 'the potent forces of magic, superstition and the brutality of war'). They set the tone of the whole review by establishing a series of semantic oppositions that provide the basis of what may now be regarded as a regular feature of this type of reviewing: the Western world is regarded as the safe, rational, civilized and relatively peaceful way, whereas Africa remains the primitive and irrational continent.

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R 183 (The Daily Telegraph)

A. Serhane, Messaouda

*"Abdelhak Serhane is a young North African novelist who writes in French. Mark Thompson must be commended on his translation of 'Messaouda', the rhythm of which sustains an overall tone of both poetic charm and terrifying realism.*

*As a young boy struggles to escape the confines and demands of living in a Moslem society, his nation struggles also for independence. Messaouda, a symbol of*

*cultural degradation encompasses a spirit that is part witch, part god, as she is subjected to psychological and physical humiliation at the hands, and all else, of male aggression and domination.*

*The book is extremely well-written, its undercurrent of violence conveyed with an honesty that is distasteful yet compelling."* [R 183]

R 183 consists of just over 110 words. It has all the regular features of this type of reviewing: lead-in (first paragraph), plot/themes summary (second paragraph) and personal comment (third paragraph). Moreover, it is characterized by a dominant reviewer and no quotations.

The lead-in contains a quality remark, expressed by means of the words 'poetic charm' and 'terrifying realism'. The adjectives 'poetic' and 'terrifying' provide readers with a first set of descriptive references to African literature.

Subsequently, the plot is characterized by key-words such as 'struggle', 'aggression', 'domination', 'humiliation', 'witch'. Finally, the quality remark includes words such as 'violence' and the book is described as 'distasteful yet compelling'.

Once again, African literature is represented by means of a series of semantic oppositions that take it for granted that Europe is the safe/rational centre, whereas Africa is the primitive land dominated by witchcraft and violence.

Moreover, phrases such as 'poetic charm' and 'terrifying realism', beside the sentence 'the book is extremely well-written' may be regarded as more examples of literary clichés and stereotypical images.

R 185 (The Guardian)

B. Okri, Incidents at the Shrine

*"the eight pessimistic tales in Ben Okri's Incidents at the Shrine come from the bowels of experience and feeling, with the flies and midden stench of the Lagos slums still on them. The Dream-Vendor's August, a down-at-heel conman is bribed to vacate his hovel for a lecherous friend and conned in turn by a magic dream that better times are coming. A boy is go-between for his childless uncle and the pregnant woman he is keeping on the side in A Crooked Prayer. Another is a dreadful visionary howl over the creeping urbanisation of daedal Africa. An awkward but striking talent is best seen in the title story, a sombre ending to village calf-love in the Biafran war". [R 185]*

This review, consisting of just over 120 words, provides one with yet another example of a very short text characterized by semantic and structural pattern regularity.

The review is a combination of plot summary ('A boy is go-between etc') and personal commentary ('The eight pessimistic tales'). No quotations are included and a number of literary clichés can be singled out: 'An awkward but striking talent', for example.

The lead-in contains a first quality remark in which the semantic oppositions that set the tone of the whole review are introduced. Africa is referred to by means of words such as 'flies', 'midden stench' and 'slums'. These concepts are reinforced in the second part of the review by phrases such as 'a dreadful visionary howl', and 'daedal [= complex and intricate] Africa' that result, once again, in providing readers with a set of semantic

oppositions in which Africa is primitive, irrational and dirty.

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R 189 (The Guardian)

A. Serhane, Messaouda

*"Messaouda is a harsh novel, showing wrecked colonial North Africa in the '50s. The only figure of freedom is Messaouda, hag and village prostitute, who haunts the streets of the village and the pages of the book as if in a dream. Otherwise, the core of the story is the patient, abused Mi, the narrator's mother.*

*The horror is driven along in taut, tense prose, translated from French, but lacking any Gallic smoothness. Abdelhak Serhane's novel is strong, but not for the faint-hearted". [R 189]*

This is one of the shortest reviews. It consists of about 80 words. The dominant voice belongs to the reviewer and no quotations can be found. The main elements are a summary of the plot and a personal commentary.

The brief lead-in (first sentence) contains a quality remark characterized by the key-words 'harsh' and 'wrecked'. The plot is subsequently described by images of abuse and 'horror'. Finally, the book is described as 'not for the faint-hearted').

The adjectives adopted may be once again regarded as part of a set of semantic oppositions in which Africa is referred to as something negative, a hard, disturbing reality.

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R 259 (The Guardian)

B. Emecheta (Destination Biafra)

*"Buchi Emecheta's Destination Biafra tries to explain the war in Nigeria by inventing characters to serve as mouthpiece for various ideas and attitudes. Too much has happened to the heroine, rape as well as Oxford and joining the army, and it is no discredit to her that she can't sustain the burden. 'I don't believe this is the right time to fight for the concept of Biafra' she remarks: not the right time nor the right talk. The most telling and chilling sentence comes at the end. The war is over but fighting is bound to continue for another day or so because 'they've got too many bombs to use up'". [R 259]*

This review consists of about 110 words.

The text is a combination of commentary ('it tries to explain the war', in the lead-in), summary of the plot ('rape as well as Oxford, and joining the army') and quotations.

A significant part of the text is devoted to long quotations ('"I don't believe this is the right time to fight for the concept of Biafra" she remarks' and '"they've got too many bombs to use up"').

The above quotations may be regarded as an attempt by the reviewer to add credibility to the review by providing readers with a direct access to examples of the writer's prose. Due to the quotations, a balance between reviewer's voice and author's voice (or characters' voice) may be detected in this review. However, the use of long quotations seems to be an unlikely event in the case of short reviews.

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R 261 (The Guardian)

B. Okri, The Landscapes Within

*"[...]From the order of the British countryside to the seedy suburbs of Lagos might be a journey to another planet. Ben Okri's hero, Omovo, lives with his father and his father's second wife while, nearby, lives the girl he loves, who has been traded into an unhappy marriage. He is an artist. He sleeps and dreams; awake, he sees the world of small portents and strangenesses, almost as if he were in a dream.*

*He and a friend stumble on a dead baby, killed in a ritual murder, which disappears, also as in a dream. The young men's heads are full of nightmare recollections of the civil war.*

*Ben Okri traces, through his hero, the incoherent patterns of life and consciousness without trying to weave them into a neat design. The Landscapes Within is a strange and brilliant book". [R 261]*

This review, the last one analysed in the present chapter, is made up of about 140 words. The reviewer is the dominant voice and no quotations can be found.

R 261 consists of a summary of the plot ('Omovo lives with his father and his father's second wife etc.') followed by the reviewer's personal comment: 'Ben Okri traces [...] the incoherent patterns of life and consciousness without trying to weave them into a neat design').

The three typical constitutive elements of short reviews may be detected in R 261 too: a lead-in ('From the order of the British countryside [a reference to the book previously reviewed in the same 'new fiction' section] to the seedy suburbs of Lagos might be a journey to another planet'), a series of references to the plot and themes and, finally, a quality remark.

The reviewer's presence is particularly evident in the lead-in and in the final comments. The lead-in sets the tone of the whole review, providing readers with a basic semantic opposition: the other planet vs the familiar British countryside. The idea of 'otherness' is further illustrated in the final comment with the reference to 'incoherent patterns of life and consciousness'.

Once again, the starting point of a review of African literature is the creation of cultural distance between the reviewer's (and, consequently, the reader's) culture (ie, the Western, civilized, rational, safe world) and the African culture (depicted or hinted at as primitive, uncivilized, dirty, messy, unstable, irrational).

## Conclusion

From the analysis of this selection of 12 short reviews of African literature taken from The Guardian and the Daily/Sunday Telegraph, certain points have emerged concerning the main features of this kind of reviewing.

First, trying to define clear differences in terms of ideological stances between the reviews published in The Guardian and those that appear in The Daily/Sunday Telegraph appears to be virtually impossible, because very little space is available for the elaboration of overt ideological references.

Second, no difference in terms of domestication techniques (on the basis of the distinction pointed out in Chapter Six) has emerged between progressive and right-wing newspapers. In the case of the longer reviews analysed in Chapter Six, differences emerged in the representation of White South African, Black (Subsaharan) African and North African literature. These differences, involving, for instance, the presence or absence of literary and/or ideological references as well as the choice of domestication approaches ('cultural' vs 'exotic'), often appeared to change according to both the geographical area and the newspaper's political stance.

In the case of short reviews, however, no such

differences have emerged. Books tend to be reviewed (ie represented) in a more uniform way, regardless of their origin in Africa. The domestication approach most frequently identified is the one that was referred to as the 'exotic other' approach in Chapter Six.

Perhaps because of the limit imposed by the length of these reviews, no representation based on the so-called 'cultural' approach has been identified. Consequently, the reviews analysed have shown no attempts to provide readers with detailed background information or guidelines. Likewise, no attempts to dismantle or expose what readers might perceive as commonplaces have emerged. On the contrary, short reviews are most particularly carriers of both literary clichés and stereotype representations of Africa.

The structural analysis has emphasized that these reviews tend to be made up of three parts: a lead-in (often including a first quality remark), a summary of the plot or a reference to the main themes and/or incidents, and, finally, a quality remark.

Sometimes the summary of the plot includes a few selected quotations (often no more than a word or two). The quality remarks and the lead-in, moreover, tend to be the two parts of the review in which the reviewer's dominant voice may be perceived most clearly.

A comparison between short reviews ('reviewing as fast-food') and longer reviews (like those analysed in Chapter Six, for instance) shows that, because of the limit imposed by the length of short reviews, adjectives are often used in a general way. Sometimes they might even be regarded as interchangeable 'literary tags', in the sense that they could easily be applied to a number of books or authors. This applies to adjectives such as 'marvellous' or 'disturbing' for instance.

In fact, adjectives such as 'haunting' or 'marvellous' are not necessarily interchangeable. Such adjectives tend to be used quite often in reviewing. However, it is only in this particular kind of short review that they run the risk of becoming interchangeable tags (clichés), perhaps because, generally, they are not followed by any further explanation as to why they are being used.

Finally, in order to further illustrate the notion of stereotype representation and the presumed interchangeability of literary clichés, it is possible, on the basis of the reviews discussed here, to go so far as 'to write an imaginary review'. This review, characterized by the presence of a number of common literary clichés and stereotype images, might be used as a 'flexible mould' that would allow the reviewing of more than one book coming from Africa, simply by adding a few lines about the plot of the book in question.

There follows a series of phrases and sentences likely to appear in such an imaginary review. The review may be divided into three parts: an introduction (lead-in), a summary of the plot/themes/incidents and a (final) comment.

a) introduction: a densely poetic book; an arresting book; it paints a vivid portrait of ...; the blend of the fantastic and the everyday; chilling and sardonic; a marvellous book; a haunting book; poetic charm and terrifying realism; a book coming from the bowels of experience;

b) plot: it deals with ...; it ends with ...; it is the story of ...; it depicts ...;

c) comment: suitably exotic; stylistic terseness; to unique and magical effect; a fascinating picture of a vibrant world; a writer of abundant promise; extremely well-written; a striking talent; the novel is strong but not for the faint-hearted; a strange and brilliant book; a most touching book; etc.

## CONCLUSION

This piece of research analysed the non-academic (newspaper) reviewing of African literature in four European countries (Great Britain, France, Spain and Italy) during the decade 1981-1990.

The nearly three hundred reviews analysed were taken from fourteen daily papers. Some of the papers may be regarded as highly representative of their countries. Others, whose circulation is not particularly widespread, have been chosen because they represent different ideological stances.

As far as the approach adopted in this thesis is concerned, some of the eight chapters were characterized by a mainly statistical approach. Others, addressed more directly some of the theoretical issues. Finally, a number of chapters were characterized either by examining particular themes or by presentation of case-study work.

As was made clear in both the Introduction to the thesis and, later on, in the Introduction to Chapters Four, Five and Six, the decision to adopt four different perspectives was taken in order to deal with as many aspects as possible of the newspaper reviewing of African literature.



The adoption of different approaches is reflected in the division of the thesis into three parts. Part One, consisting of Chapters One, Two and Three represents a theoretical and statistical introduction. Part Two, consisting of an Introduction followed by Chapters Four, Five and Six, represents a thematic analysis. Part Three, finally, consisting of Chapters Seven and Eight, contains the presentation of case-study work.

Chapter One and the Introduction to Chapters Four, Five and Six (ie to Part Two), dealt with newspaper reviewing from a mainly theoretical point of view.

Chapters Two and Three were mainly concerned with a statistical analysis. However, Chapter Three may be regarded as a transition chapter aimed at introducing some issues, such as the style and technique of 'regular' reviewers and reviewing as 'cultural fast-food', subsequently addressed in more detail in Chapters Seven and Eight.

The central part of the thesis, Chapters Four, Five and Six, consisted of a mainly thematic analysis discussing some aspects of reviewing such as the multiplicity of voices, the aims of reviewing and the representation of otherness.

There follows a brief summary of the findings of each chapter.

Chapter One represented a theoretical approach to newspaper reviewing. It started by addressing the notion

of literature as a joint social operation and the review as a text.

Subsequently, the chapter focussed on a debate that took place in 1991 (which still appears to be going on in 1993) in some European newspapers and magazines. The debate deals with the nature, rôle and current state of newspaper reviewing.

Critics appeared to unanimously deplore the current state of reviewing by pointing to a crisis. The crisis allegedly undergone by newspaper reviewing was explained in terms of an increased presence of corporate pressures that appear to have weakened the intellectual energies of criticism.

From the analysis of the debate a definition of both the aim of reviewing (ie informing readers about the value and qualities as well as the social purpose of books) and the rôle of the so-called 'committed' reviewer (a critic who is capable of ignoring corporate pressures while adopting a wide-ranging reviewing approach) emerged.

In Chapter One one of the aims of this thesis was indicated: to demonstrate that, in spite of the overall mood of pessimism amongst critics, there is still scope for optimism, in the sense that what is regarded as 'committed' criticism still exists. This has been demonstrated particularly in the analysis and discussion of reviews in Chapters Four to Eight.

Finally, Chapter One also pointed out that the analysis of national European papers showed that African literature is not reviewed frequently, at least in comparison with American literature or even Japanese literature, a fact that seems to imply that the presence of certain geographic areas in the literary pages of newspapers is directly linked with the political, cultural and/or economic power of those areas. In other

words, Chapter One pointed to a question of cultural hegemony.

Chapter Two, a statistical analysis, was divided into four sections.

Section One, a comparative analysis of four highly representative European papers at five points in the decade (1981, 1984, 1987, 1989 and 1990) aimed at both illustrating the state of reviewing for each newspaper and pointing to the emergence of national or supranational reviewing trends.

The main point that emerged is that the reviewing of African literature has been on the increase in all four countries in the decade analysed. Moreover, a significant difference emerged, as far as reviewing attitudes are concerned, between countries with a strong colonial past (Great Britain and France) and other countries that were only involved in the colonization of Africa to a minor extent (Spain and Italy).

The emergence of a new cultural fashion ('Third-Worldism') in the second half of the decade (particularly manifest in Spain and Italy) was identified in addition to the powerful large-scale impact of the Nobel Prize.

Finally, one more trend was identified concerning Great Britain and France. In the period 1981-1985, both countries displayed an idiosyncrasy (or insularity) as far as the selection of books to be reviewed was concerned. Both countries tended to give priority to books coming from their former colonies and to leave the literature of the rest of the continent virtually ignored.

In the second half of the decade, however, the two countries began to adopt more open approaches in the selection of books and authors.

Section Two aimed at singling out a number of regular contributors. Eight reviewers were identified, while their activity was contextualized on the basis of the trends identified in Section One.

Section Three identified both the authors and the books that were most frequently reviewed in the period analysed. Thus the 19 authors who are the subject of the majority of reviews were identified.

Subsequently, the 19 authors were analysed in terms of geographic distribution and gender, and it was pointed out that only 4 women rank amongst them.

In Section Three it was also shown that only a very limited number of African writers can claim substantial European circulation.

Moreover, a difference was identified between trends in Italy and Spain concerning the choice of African authors. In Spain, reviewers tend to give priority to the introduction of the so-called 'giants' of African literature, whereas in Italy critics appear more interested in the introduction of as many African writers as possible, including 'minor' writers, in order to illustrate as many aspects as possible of African literature.

The domination of White South African and North African literature and, consequently, the absence of Black African literature, was also pointed out in the analysis of the books that seem to have achieved a widespread European circulation.

Section Four, finally, was devoted to the statistical analysis of the so called 'minor' writers, ie those for whom only one or two reviews have been found.

This section also indicated the identity of 'minor' writers, their origin and languages as well as their European circulation. In some cases, the trends previously identified in the case of the 19 'major' writers applied to the 'minor' authors as well: for example, the limited number of women reviewed.

The situation was different, however, as regards the authors' origins. Whereas Black African authors represented a tiny minority amongst the 'major' African writers, they seemed to represent more than half of the 'minor' writers.

Chapter Three attempted a detailed analysis of the development of reviewing trends, concerning all 14 European newspapers in the decade 1981-1990.

The more comprehensive approach of this chapter (at least in comparison with Chapter Two, which only analysed the four newspapers regarded as representative of their countries), an analysis of each newspaper and country, allowed more trends to emerge, some of them being typical of certain countries, others applying to certain newspapers only.

Two trends were identified in Great Britain. The first one is characterized by the domination of White South African and Black African literature of English

expression, by a considerable influence of international literary awards and, finally, by a certain awareness of the existence of African literature in French, Arabic, Portuguese and other local languages. This trend appears to apply to The Daily/Sunday Telegraph, The Guardian and The Independent.

The other trend, typical of The Morning Star, gives priority to South African and Black African authors whose commitment in terms of an anti-imperialistic struggle is mirrored in the choice of a particular literary genre (such as social realism, for instance).

Both trends, however, seem to ignore Black African literature of French expression.

In France, the situation seems to be more homogeneous and the trends identified in the case of Le Monde, in Chapter Two, also apply to Le Figaro and L'Humanité.

Le Monde was identified as an example of a European paper that devotes a considerable amount of reviewing space to African literature. It tackles all geographic areas, often showing a balance between the number of reviews of African literature of French expression and those of African literature in other languages, although, as a whole, post-colonial links still appear to have a strong influence.

In Italy, the beginning of a genuine interest in African literature was detected in the second half of the decade. Perhaps, it is an interest partly dictated by the Nobel Prize effect and a form of fashionable cultural Third-Worldism.

All Italian newspapers analysed (L'Osservatore Romano, La Stampa, La Repubblica and Il Manifesto), in comparison with the Spanish papers, appear to be more interested in 'minor' African authors and, consequently, seem to be

disrespectful of international literary awards (even though, paradoxically, the introduction of African literature might be partly due to such literary awards).

The significant experiment carried out by Il Manifesto (ie the publication of 25 reviews of African literature between 1986 and 1988) was also remarked upon.

Finally, in the case of Spain, an interest in African literature suddenly appeared in the second half of the decade. The three newspapers analysed (ABC, La Vanguardia and El País) follow the same reviewing trends: they all concentrate on the 'giants' of African literature. The Nobel Prize effect seems to be particularly powerful in Spain.

Chapter Three was followed by an Introduction to Chapters Four, Five and Six (ie Part Two of the thesis), the chapters containing a mainly theme-oriented comparative analysis of newspaper reviewing, dealing with the multiplicity of voices, the aims of reviewing and the representation of otherness on the basis of reviews of White South African, Black African (Subsaharan) and North African literature.

Chapter Four, an analysis of the multiplicity of voices and the presence of dominant voices, demonstrated that a review is a text characterized by the presence of a reviewer who may be regarded as a coordinator of voices and discourses.

Different voice combinations were identified and the extracts from the reviews allowed one to say that the voices carrying the messages in a review include the reviewer, the author, the characters of the book as well as, at times, other, perhaps extra-textual, voices.

Chapter Four also pointed out the typical devices by means of which an author can be assigned the dominant voice, as well as the devices that aim at equally distributing the reviewing space between the author and the reviewer in the case of a balance between the two voices. Finally, the case in which the dominant voice belongs to the reviewer was identified and illustrated.

Chapter Five aimed at demonstrating that a number of regular 'moods' or 'tones' may characterize newspaper reviewing as far as the aims of reviewing are concerned.

A categorization of the most typical 'moods' identified at least six ways of informing:

- a) reviewing as a display of knowledge;
- b) reviewing as lecturing;
- c) reviewing as direct access to authors;
- d) reviewing as the overt expression of a personal opinion;
- e) overtly ideological reviewing;
- f) reviewing as 'cultural fast-food'.

The analysis of the reviews, however, showed that, in reality, more than one 'tone' may often be found in the same text, although one of the tones always tends to dominate.

Chapter Six was an analysis of the familiarization or domestication (ie representation) techniques adopted in the reviewing of African literature. It was divided into three sections dealing with White South African, Black African (Subsaharan) and North African literature respectively.

The chapter aimed at answering two questions:



1) Do domestication techniques tend to change in accordance with the geographical origin of the author and book reviewed?

2) Is the ideological stance of a newspaper always apparent in reviewing?

As far as the first question is concerned, different ways of representation were identified. Representations tend to change in accordance with the different degree of 'otherness' of books. Black African literature, due to its cultural distance and the lack of traditional cultural links with Europe was found to be more 'other' than North or White South African literature.

Three different kinds of representation were identified in this chapter:

- a representation based on political/literary references (characteristic of White South African literature, in which 'otherness' is linked with apartheid and its implications).

- a 'cultural' representation, characterized by guidelines emphasizing what the reviewer regards as ways of 'correctly decoding the other culture'. This approach is often found in the reviewing of Black African literature. Africa tends to be represented as a series of different and dynamic realities;

- an exotic representation, the opposite of the 'cultural' approach. Africa appears to be represented as one big static continent. There seems to be no attempt to bridge the presumed gap of otherness. Readers are provided with frozen and stereotype images that tend to deny the coevalness between cultures. This approach is often found in right-wing newspapers.

As far as the second question is concerned, it was demonstrated that ideological implications, as a whole, tend to be manifest and therefore predictable.

In the case of White South African literature, literary references tend to replace political references as one moves from left-wing papers towards the right-wing and Catholic press.

In the case of Subsaharan literature, as one moves towards the political right, 'cultural' representations tend to be replaced by exotic representations.

Finally, as far as North African literature is concerned, the same changes as in the case of White South African literature were detected.

Chapter Seven was an analysis of the style and technique of some regular contributors, divided into three sections dealing with Cristiana Pugliese (Il Manifesto), Chris Searle (The Morning Star) and Tahar Ben Jelloun (Le Monde) respectively.

The chapter was based on the assumption that regular reviewing provides writers with an opportunity to develop a coherent discourse on African literature. Sometimes (as is the case with Cristiana Pugliese), the reviews, taken as a whole, may be read as an introduction to African literature. Chris Searle and Tahar Ben Jelloun's reviews, however, have comparatively less of an introductory flavour. This is mainly due to the fact that the reviewing of African literature has been long established in both France and Great Britain.

In Chapter Seven, different personal ways of reviewing emerged, stressing the fact that each critic tends to resort to a set of favourite key-words, stock-themes, literary/ideological references and rhetorical

devices.

Chapter Eight, finally, was an analysis of short reviews, ie reviewing meant as 'cultural fast-food'. This chapter aimed at dealing with those very short reviews that do not exceed 150 words. It also looked at the notion of the presumed 'interchangeability' of literary clichés and stereotype images with the aid of examples and extracts taken from the reviews.

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## APPENDIX

### Authors reviewed (in alphab. order)

Achebe, Chinua

Nigeria

English

Il Manifesto, 16/17.11.86

Les termitières de la savane

Le Monde, 3.8.90

Anthills of the Savannah

The Daily Telegraph, 19.9.87

The Sunday Telegraph, 4.10.87

The Independent, 24.9.87

The Guardian, 25.9.87

Il crollo

La Stampa, 8.9.90

Ormai a disagio

La Stampa, 8.9.90

Aidoo, Ama Ata

Ghana

English

Il Manifesto, 25/26.1.87

Al-Ghitani, Gamal

Egypt

Arabic

Zayni Barakat

The Daily Telegraph, 10.12.88

Bâ, Mariama

Senegal

French

So-Long-A-Letter

The Guardian, 12.8.82

Belamri, Rabah

Algeria

French

Regard blessé

Le Monde, 5.6.87

Mémoire en archipel

Le Monde, 14.12.90

L'asile de pierre

Le Monde, 1.12.89

Ben Jelloun, Tahar

Morocco

**French/Arabic**

Jour de silence à Tanger

Le Figaro, 22.1.90

Le Monde, 12.1.90

Giorno di silenzio a Tangeri

La Stampa, 30.12.89

Le pareti della solitudine

La Stampa, 29.9.90

The Sand Child

The Daily Telegraph, 1.4.89

Creatura di sabbia

La Repubblica, 21.1.88

El niño de arena

La Vanguardia, 15.10.87

L'enfant de sable

Le Figaro, 13.9.85

Le Monde, 6.9.85

La nuit sacrée

Le Figaro, 28.9.87

Le Monde, 4.9.87

La Vanguardia, 3.12.87

The Sacred Night

The Sunday Telegraph, 17.12.89

The Guardian, 14.12.89

La noche sagrada

El País, 17.10.88

Notte fatale

La Stampa, 9.7.88

La prière de l'absent

Le Monde, 4.9.81

**Bottignole, Silvana (ed.)**

Italy

Un angolo d'Africa: il Kenya visto dai suoi scrittori

L'Osservatore Romano, 4.2.85

**Boudjedra, Rachid**

Algeria

French

La pluie

L'Humanité, 1.4.87

La pioggia

La Repubblica, 3.3.90

La macération

Le Figaro, 23.8.85

Le Figaro, 6.9.85

L'Humanité, 16.10.85

Le démantèlement

Le Monde, 17.9.82

Le vainqueur de coupe

Le Monde, 27.11.81

La répudiation

Le Monde, 27.11.81

**Breytenbach, Breyten**

South Africa

Afrikaans/English

Memoria di neve e di polvere

La Repubblica, 12.5.90  
Memory of Snow and of Dust  
The Sunday Telegraph, 30.7.89  
The Guardian, 28.7.89  
The Independent, 5.8.89  
Le veritiere confessioni di un africano albino  
La Stampa, 15.7.89  
La Repubblica, 1.7.89  
The True Confessions of an Albino Terrorist  
The Morning Star, 31.1.85  
Confession véridique d'un terroriste albinos  
Le Monde, 11.5.84  
Une saison au paradis  
Le Monde, 14.3.86  
Mouroir: Mirrornotes of a Novel  
The Guardian, 3.5.84

Brink, André  
South Africa  
Afrikaans/English  
El País, 23.10.86  
A Dry White Season  
The Sunday Telegraph, 11.3.90  
Un'arida stagione bianca  
La Stampa, 2.12.89  
States of Emergency  
The Sunday Telegraph, 5.6.88  
The Daily Telegraph, 11.6.88  
The Guardian, 6.5.88  
États d'urgence  
Le Monde, 22.7.88  
Un istante nel vento  
La Stampa, 15.10.88  
L'ambassadeur  
Le Monde, 14.3.86  
The Ambassador  
The Guardian, 14.11.85  
Le mur de la peste  
Le Monde, 21.9.84  
The Wall of the Plague  
The Guardian, 20.9.84  
Sur un banc du Luxembourg  
Le Monde, 15.7.83  
Un turbulent silence  
Le Monde, 28.5.82  
A Chain of Voices  
The Guardian, 13.5.82

Charef, Mehdi  
Algeria  
French  
Le Harki de Meriem  
Le Figaro, 9.10.89

Chevrier, Jacques (ed.)  
France  
Letteratura negra di espressione francese  
L'Osservatore Romano, 27.5.87

Il Manifesto, 1.8.87

Chinweizu (ed.)

Voices from Twentieth-Century Africa

The Guardian, 18.11.88

Choukri, Mohamed

Morocco

Arabic

Il pane nudo

La Stampa, 25.2.89

El pan desnudo

La Vanguardia, 16.12.88

Chraïbi, Driss

Morocco

French

Naissance à l'aube

Le Monde, 23.5.86

La mère du printemps

Le Monde, 17.9.82

Coetzee, J M

South Africa

English

El País, 23.10.86

Age of Iron

The Sunday Telegraph, 23.9.90

The Guardian, 20.9.90

The Independent, 15.9.90

Foe

ABC, 4.2.89

La Vanguardia, 10.3.89

El País, 19.2.89

Foe

Le Figaro, 27.9.88

Foe

La Stampa, 15.10.88

Foe

The Daily Telegraph, 12.9.86

The Guardian, 12.9.86

Esperando a los bárbaros

ABC, 28.10.89

El País, 15.10.89

En attendant les barbares

Le Monde, 28.5.82

Vida y época de Michael K.

ABC, 13.2.88

El País, 31.1.88

La vita e il tempo di Michael K

La Stampa, 27.12.86

Michael K, sa vie, son temps

Le Monde, 7.6.85

The Life and Times of Michael K

The Guardian, 29.9.83

Dib, Mohammed

Algeria

French

Les terrasses d'Orsol

Le Monde, 9.8.85

Djaout, Tahar

Algeria

French

L'invention du désert

L'Humanité, 1.4.87

Le Monde, 5.6.87

Djebar, Assia

Algeria

French

A Sister to Sheherazade

The Daily Telegraph, 11.6.88

The Guardian, 3.6.88

L'amour, la fantasia

Le Monde, 10.5.85

Donne d'Algeri nei loro appartamenti

Il Manifesto, 26.3.88

Ebersohn, Wessel

South Africa

English

Les greniers de la colère

Le Monde, 22.7.88

Ekwensi, Cyprian

Nigeria

English

Il Manifesto, 28.6.87

El-Hassani, Mohamed Kacimi

Morocco

French

Le mouchoir

Le Monde, 5.6.87

Elkon, Jon

South Africa

English

Umfaan's Heroes

The Morning Star, 2.3.89

El-Maleh, Edmond Amran

Morocco

French

Mille ans un jour

Le Monde, 23.5.86

Aïlen ou la nuit du récit

Le Monde, 4.3.83

El Saadawi, Nawal

Egypt

Arabic

The Circling Song

The Independent, 22.7.89

She has no Place in Paradise  
The Daily Telegraph, 9.1.88  
The Morning Star, 14.4.88  
The Fall of the Imam  
The Daily Telegraph, 4.1.88  
Memoirs of a Woman Doctor  
The Morning Star, 25.8.88

Emecheta, Buchi  
Nigeria  
English  
Destination Biafra  
The Guardian, 21.1.82

Fagunwa, Chief D O  
Nigeria  
Yoruba  
La foresta dei mille demonii  
La Stampa, 12.10.85  
Il Manifesto, 14.2.86

Farah, Nuruddin  
Somalia  
English  
Maps  
The Guardian, 24.4.86  
Sardines  
The Guardian, 26.11.81

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R 3

by Nadine Gordimer  
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29 Mar: Palace Walk

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13 Sep: My Son's Story

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R 11

by Nadine Gordimer  
Bloomsbury  
Zoe Heller

29 Sep: Age of Iron

R 12

by J M Coetzee  
Secker & Warburg  
Sylvester Stein

### The Morning Star

1990

18 Jan: Tenderness of Blood

R 13

by Mandla Langa  
Klipton Books

Jesus is Indian and other South African  
Stories

R 14

by Agnes Sam  
Women's Press

Chris Searle

26 Apr: Dumba Nengue: Peasant Tales of Mozambique

R 15

by Lina Magaia  
Karnak House  
Chris Searle

## Le Figaro

1990

22 Jan: Jour de silence à Tanger

R 16

by Tahar Ben Jelloun  
Le Seuil  
André Brincourt

26 Apr: Le chercheur d'Afriques

R 17

by Henri Lopes  
Le Seuil  
Jorge Amado

## Le Monde

1990

12 Jan: Jour de silence à Tanger

R 18

by Tahar Ben Jelloun  
Le Seuil  
Pierre Lepape

16 Feb: Monnè, outrages et défis

R 19

by Ahmadou Kourouma  
Le Seuil  
Pierre-Robert Leclercq

16 Feb: Un caprice de la nature

R 20

by Nadine Gordimer  
Albin Michel  
Hector Bianciotti

09 Mar: Le chercheur d'Afriques

R 21

by Henri Lopes  
Le Seuil  
Alain Salles

03 Aug: Les termitières de la savane

R 22

by Chinua Achebe  
Belfond  
Denise Coussy

14 Dec: Mémoire en archipel

R 23

by Rabah Belamri  
Hatier  
Jean-Noël Pancrazi

**L'Humanité**

1990

-

**La Stampa**

1990

26 May: Luuanda

R 24

by José Luandino Vieira  
Feltrinelli  
Giuliano Soria

08 Sep: Il crollo and Ormai a disagio

R 25/26

by Chinua Achebe  
Mondadori

La vita e mezza

R 27

by Sony Labou Tansi  
Edizioni Lavoro

Racconti africani

R 28

ed. Cristiana Pugliese  
Terra Nuova

Povero, baruffone e malandrino

R 29

by Amos Tutuola  
Feltrinelli

Claudio Gorlier

29 Sep: Le pareti della solitudine

R 30

by Tahar Ben Jelloun  
Einaudi  
Ernesto Gagliano

**La Repubblica**

1990

10 Feb: Tra i due palazzi

R 31

by Naguib Mahfouz  
Tullio Pironti  
Fabio Ciriachi

03 Mar: La pioggia

R 32

by Rachid Boudjedra  
Edizioni Lavoro  
Fabio Ciriachi

21 Apr: Il ladro e i cani

R 33

by Naguib Mahfouz  
Feltrinelli  
Cristiano Franceschi

12 May: Memoria di neve e di polvere

R 34

by Breyten Breytenbach  
Costa & Nolan  
Giuseppe Leonelli

17 Nov: Vivere nell'interregno

R 35

by Nadine Gordimer  
Feltrinelli  
Giuseppe Conte

Reviews (1989)

The Daily/Sunday Telegraph

1989

01 Apr (D): The Sand Child

R 36

by Tahar Ben Jelloun  
Quartet  
Julia Neuberger

30 Jul (S): Memory of Snow and of Dust

R 37

by Breyten Breytenbach  
Faber  
Christopher Hope

17 Dec (S): The sacred night

R 38

by Tahar Ben Jelloun  
Quartet  
Michael Moorcock

The Guardian

1989

02 Jun: Matigari

R 39

by Ngugi wa Thiong'o  
Heinemann  
Michelle Quinn

28 Jul: Memory of Snow and of Dust

R 40

by Breyten Breytenbach  
Faber  
Norman Shrapnel

14 Dec: The Sacred Night

R 41

by Tahar Ben Jelloun  
Quartet  
Norman Shrapnel

28 Dec: The Last Sunday

R 42

by Elsa Joubert  
Hodder & Stoughton  
Christopher Wordsworth

### The Independent

1989

20 May: Matigari

R 43

by Ngugi wa Thiong'o  
Heinemann  
Adewale Maja-Pearce

10 Jun: Upon this Mountain

R 44

by Timothy Wangusa  
Heinemann  
Georgina Andrewes

22 Jul: The Circling Song

R 45

by Nawal el Saadawi  
Zed Books  
Diana Hinds

05 Aug: Memory of Snow and of Dust

R 46

by Breyten Breytenbach  
Faber  
Adewale Maja-Pearce

### The Morning Star

1989

02 Mar: And a Threefold Cord

R 47

by Alex La Guma  
Kliptown Books

Umfaan's Heroes

R 48

by Jon Elkon  
Andre Deutsch

Chris Searle

24 Aug: Matigari

R 49

by Ngugi wa Thiong'o  
Heinemann  
Chris Searle

### Le Figaro

1989

06 Jun: L'honneur de la tribu

R 50

by Rachid Mimouni  
Laffont  
Jean Chalon

09 Oct: Le Harki de Meriem  
R 51

by Mehdi Charef  
Mercure de France  
Patrick Besson

#### Le Monde

1989

28 Jul: L'honneur de la tribu  
R 52

by Rachid Mimouni  
Laffont  
Tahar Ben Jelloun

10 Nov: La chanson des gueux  
R 53

by Naguib Mahfouz  
Denoël

R 54 Dérives sur le Nil

by Naguib Mahfouz  
?

R 55 Le jardin du passé

by Naguib Mahfouz  
Lattès

Alexandre Buccianti

01 Dec: L'asile de pierre  
R 56

by Rabah Belamri  
Gallimard  
Jean-Noël Pancrazi

#### L'Humanité

1989

14 Jun: Les rides du lion  
R 57

by Abdellatif Laâbi  
Messidor (?)  
Claude Prévost

#### ABC

1989

04 Feb: Foe  
R 58

by J M Coetzee



Alfaguara  
José García Nieto

29 Jul: Dialogadas (1967-1971)

R 59

by Naguib Mahfouz  
Alianza  
José M Parreño

02 Sep: La ausencia

R 60

by Naguib Mahfouz  
Peninsula  
?

14 Oct: El cónclave de las planideras

R 61

by Fawzi Mellah  
Montesinos  
Antonio Maura

21 Oct: Entre dos palacios

R 62

by Naguib Mahfouz  
Alcor  
Miguel García-Posada

28 Oct: Esperando a los bárbaros

R 63

by J M Coetzee  
Alfaguara  
Ana Salado

#### La Vanguardia

1989

10 Mar: Foe

R 64

by J M Coetzee  
Alfaguara  
Miguel Dalmau

02 Jun: Dialogadas (1967-1971)

R 65

by Naguib Mahfouz  
Alianza  
Ingrid Bejarano Escanilla

#### El País

1989

19 Feb: Foe

R 66

by J M Coetzee

Alfaguara  
José Antonio Ugalde

30 Apr: Dialogadas (1967-1971)  
R 67

by Naguib Mahfouz  
Alianza

R 68 Amor bajo la lluvia

by Naguib Mahfouz  
CantArabia

Yolanda González

15 Oct: Esperando a los bárbaros  
R 69

by J M Coetzee  
Alfaguara  
Juan Carlos Suñén

26 Nov: Historias de nuestro barrio  
R 70

by Naguib Mahfouz  
Ediciones Libertarias/Prodhufi  
Khaled Salem

L'Osservatore Romano

1989

-

La Stampa

1989

25 Feb: Il pane nudo  
R 71

by Mohamed Choukri  
Theoria  
Giovanni Bogliolo

06 May: Per ordini superiori  
R 72

by Mike Nicol  
Leonardo  
Claudio Gorlier

03 Jun: Vicolo del mortaio  
R 73

by Naguib Mahfuz  
Feltrinelli  
Claudio Gorlier

15 Jul: Soweto  
R 74

by Sipho Sepamla  
Edizioni Lavoro

R 75 Le veritiere confessioni di un africano albino

by Breyten Breytenbach  
Costa & Nolan

Claudio Gorlier

02 Dec: Un'arida stagione bianca  
R 76

by André Brink  
Frassinelli  
Michele Neri

30 Dec: Giorno di silenzio a Tangeri  
R 77

by Tahar Ben Jelloun  
Einaudi  
Giovanni Bogliolo

#### La Repubblica

1989

07 Oct: Il nostro quartiere  
R 78

by Naguib Mahfuz  
Feltrinelli  
Fabio Ciriachi

01 Jul: Le veritiere confessioni di un africano albino  
R 79

by Breyten Breytenbach  
Costa & Nolan  
Fabio Ciriachi

## Reviews (1988)

### The Daily/Sunday Telegraph

1988

09 Jan (D): She Has No Place in Paradise  
R 80

by Nawal El Saadawi  
Methuen  
Martyn Goff

04 Jun (D): The Fall of the Imam  
R 104

by Nawal El Saadawi  
Methuen  
Hilary Mantel

05 Jun (S): States of Emergency  
R 81

by André Brink  
Faber  
Bruce Anderson

11 Jun (D): States of Emergency  
R 82

by André Brink  
Faber  
Denis Worrall

11 Jun (D): A Sister to Sheherazade  
R 83

by Assia Djebar  
Quartet  
Patrick Gale

23 Jul (D): Stars of the New Curfew  
R 84

by Ben Okri  
Secker  
Martin Cropper

10 Dec (D): Zayni Barakat  
R 85

by Gamal Al-Ghitani  
Wahib  
Hilary Mantel

The Guardian

1988

04 Mar: Bloodsong and Other Stories of South Africa

R 86

by Ernst Havemann  
Hamish Hamilton  
Amryl Johnson

25 Mar: The World of "Mestre" Tamoda

R 87

by Uanhenga Xitu  
Readers International  
Caryl Phillips

06 May: States of Emergency

R 88

by André Brink  
Faber  
Brian Dooley

03 Jun: A Sister to Sheherazade

R 89

by Assia Djebar  
Quartet  
Robert Nye

15 Jul: Stars of the New Curfew

R 90

by Ben Okri  
Secker & Warburg  
Linda Taylor

19 Aug: Coming Home and Other Stories

R 91

by Farida Karodia  
Heinemann  
Harriett Gilbert

28 Oct: Women of the Aeroplanes

R 92

by Kojo Laing  
Heinemann  
Norman Shrapnel

18 Nov: Voices from Twentieth-Century Africa

R 93

selected by Chinweizu  
Faber  
David Dab<sub>y</sub>deen

30 Dec: Heroes

R 94

by F. Iyayi  
Longman  
David Dab<sub>y</sub>deen

### The Independent

1988

18 Aug: Stars of the New Curfew

R 95

by Ben Okri  
Secker & Warburg  
Anthony Quinn

29 Oct: Women of the Aeroplanes

R 96

by Kojo Laing  
Heinemann  
Diana Hinds

### The Morning Star

1988

14 Apr: She has no Place in Paradise

R 97

by Nawal El-Saadawi  
Methuen  
Chris Searle

25 Aug: Memoirs of a Woman Doctor

R 98

by Nawal El-Saadawi  
Saqi  
Chris Searle

13 Oct: Man Pass Man and Other Stories

R 99

by Ndeley Mokoso  
Longman  
Chris Searle

17 Nov: Coming Home and Other Stories

R 100

by Farida Karodia  
Heinemann  
Chris Searle

### Le Figaro

1988

27 Sep: Foe

R 101

by J M Coetzee  
Le Seuil  
Claude Michel Cluny

Le Monde

1988

22 Jul: Elissa, la reine vagabonde

R 102

by Fawzi Mellah  
Seuil  
Tahar Ben Jelloun

22 Jul: Ma vie dans la brousse des fantômes

R 103

by Amos Tutuola  
Belfond  
Denise Coussy

22 Jul: États d'urgence

R 105

by André Brink  
Stock

Les greniers de la colère

R 106

by Wessel Ebersohn  
Ed. B. Coutaz

Bernard Génès

14 Oct: La montagne du lion

R 107

by Mustafa Tlili  
Gallimard  
Patrick Kéchichian

28 Oct: Récits de notre quartier

R 108

by Nagub Mahfouz  
Sindbad  
André Velter

L'Humanité

1988

10 Aug: Les Blancs

R 109

by Norman Rush  
Flammarion  
Claude Prévost

ABC

1988

13 Feb: Vida y época de Michael K.

R 110

by J M Coetzee  
Alfaguara  
Pedro Antonio Urbina

- 22 Oct: Le palais du désir  
 R 111  
 by Naguib Mahfuz  
 Lattes (Paris)
- Impasse des deux palais  
 R 112  
 by Naguib Mahfuz  
 Lattes (Paris)
- Le voleur et les chiens  
 R 113  
 by Naguib Mahfuz  
 Sindbad (Paris)
- Passage des Miracles  
 R 114  
 by Naguib Mahfuz  
 Sindbad (Paris)
- Juan Pedro Quiñonero
- 19 Nov: Miramar  
 R 115  
 by Naguib Mahfuz  
 Icaria Literaria  
 ?
- La Vanguardia
- 1988
- 04 Nov: El callejón de los milagros  
 R 116  
 by Naguib Mahfuz  
 Alcor  
 Robert Saladrigas
- 16 Dec: El pan desnudo  
 R 117  
 by Mohamed Chukri  
 Montesinos  
 Victor M Amela
- El País
- 1988
- 31 Jan: Vida y época de Michael K.  
 R 118  
 by J M Coetzee  
 Alfaguara  
 Encarna Castejón
- 03 Apr: Un invitado de honor  
 R 119  
 by Nadine Gordimer  
 Ed. Tusquets
- Un capricho de la naturaleza  
 R 120



by Nadine Gordimer  
Ed. Versal

Constantino Bértolo

10 Jul: La noche sagrada

R 121

by Tahar Ben Jelloun  
Peninsula  
Juan Luís Conde

06 Nov: on Mahfuz's books translated into Spanish

R 122

#### L'Osservatore Romano

1988

13 Jul: Shaka Zulu

R 123

by Joshua Sinclair  
Mondadori  
(Antonio Chilà) ?

#### La Stampa

1988

02 Jan: Il conservatore

R 124

by Nadine Gordimer  
La Tartaruga

Una forza della natura

R 125

by Nadine Gordimer  
Feltrinelli

Masolino D'Amico

12 Mar: Le sette solitudini di Lorsa Lopes

R 126

by Sony Labou Tansi  
Einaudi  
Mauro Baudino

09 Jul: Notte fatale

R 127

by Tahar Ben Jelloun  
Einaudi  
Giovanni Bogliolo

15 Oct: La donna dei tesori

R 128

by Bessie Head  
Edizioni Lavoro

R 129     Spedizione al baobab  
by Wilma Stockenstrom  
Il Quadrante

R 130     Foe  
by J M Coetzee  
Rizzoli

R 131     Un istante nel vento  
by André Brink  
Rizzoli

Masolino D'Amico

#### La Repubblica

1988

21 Jan: Creatura di sabbia

R 132  
by Tahar Ben Jelloun  
Einaudi  
Stefano Giovanardi  
interview by Natalia Aspesi

#### Il Manifesto

1988

07 Feb: "Crema per schiarire la pelle"

R 284  
a short story by D Marechera

25 Mar: Donne d'Algeri nei loro appartamenti

R 133  
by Assia Djebar  
Giunti Astrea

10 Apr: "Colore"

R 290  
a short story by Peter Abrahams

14 Oct: on Naguib Mahfuz

R 283

all reviews, introductions and translations  
by Cristiana Pugliese

Reviews (1987)  
The Daily/Sunday Telegraph

1987

05 Apr (S): A Sport of Nature

R 134

by Nadine Gordimer  
Cape  
Mervyn Jones

10 Apr (D): A Sport of Nature

R 135

by Nadine Gordimer  
Cape  
Elizabeth Berridge

Pauper, Brawler and Slanderer

R 136

by Amos Tutuola  
Faber  
K McL.

14 Jun (S): Pauper, Brawler and Slanderer

R 137

by Amos Tutuola  
Faber  
D A N Jones

19 Sep (D): Anthills of the Savannah

R 138

by Chinua Achebe  
Heinemann  
Nina Bawden

04 Oct (S): Anthills of the Savannah

R 139

by Chinua Achebe  
Heinemann  
Patrick Skene Catling

The Guardian

1987

03 Apr: A Sport of Nature

R 140

by Nadine Gordimer  
Cape  
Christopher Hope

10 Apr: Pauper, Brawler and Slanderer

R 141

by Amos Tutuola  
Faber  
Norman Shrapnel

25 Sep: Anthills of the Savannah

R 142

by Chinua Achebe

Heinemann  
Norman Shrapnel

**The Independent**

1987

02 Apr: A Sport of Nature  
R 143

by Nadine Gordimer  
Cape  
Peter Kemp

24 Sep: Anthills of the Savannah  
R 144

by Chinua Achebe  
Heinemann  
Richard Dowden

**The Morning Star**

1987

20 Aug: Beer in the Snooker Club  
R 145

by Waguih Ghali  
Serpent's Tail  
Chris Searle

**Le Figaro**

1987

28 Sep: La nuit sacrée  
R 146

by Tahar Ben Jelloun  
Seuil  
André Brincourt

**Le Monde**

1987

05 Jun: Le mouchoir  
R 147

by Mohamed Kacimi El-Hassani  
L'Harmattan  
J-P Péroncel-Hugoz

05 Jun: Le conclave des pleureuses  
R 148

by Fawzi Mellah  
Le Seuil  
Tahar Ben Jelloun

05 Jun: L'invention du désert  
R 149

by Tahar Djaout  
Le Seuil  
Tahar Ben Jelloun

05 Jun: Regard blessé  
R 150

by Rabah Belamri  
Gallimard  
J-P Péroncel-Hugoz

04 Sep: La nuit sacrée  
R 151

by Tahar Ben Jelloun  
Le Seuil  
Pierre Lepape

#### L'Humanité

1987

01 Apr: L'invention du désert  
R 152

by Tahar Djaout  
Seuil

R 153 La pluie

by Rachid Boudjedra  
Denoël

Claude Prévost

#### ABC

1987

10 Jan: El hombre ha muerto  
R 154

by Wole Soyinka  
Alfaguara  
Miguel García-Posada

14 Feb: Ocasión de amar  
R 155

by Nadine Gordimer  
Versal  
Miguel García-Posada

04 Apr: Aké. Los años de la niñez  
R 156

by Wole Soyinka  
Alfaguara

15 Aug: Hay algo ahí fuera  
R 157

by Nadine Gordimer  
Alianza Tres  
Miguel García-Posada

10 Oct: Ese último mundo burgués  
R 158  
by Nadine Gordimer  
Versal  
Ana Salado

**La Vanguardia**

1987

05 Mar: El hombre ha muerto  
R 159  
by Wole Soyinka  
Alfaguara  
Robert Saladrigas

08 Oct: La hija de Burger  
R 160  
by Nadine Gordimer  
Tusquets

R 161  
Ocasión de amar  
by Nadine Gordimer  
Versal

R 162  
El último mundo burgués  
by Nadine Gordimer  
Versal

R 163  
Hay algo ahí fuera  
by Nadine Gordimer  
Alianza  
Susana Camps

15 Oct: El niño de arena  
R 164  
by Tahar Ben Jelloun  
Península  
Robert Saladrigas

03 Dec: La nuit sacrée  
R 165  
by Tahar Ben Jelloun  
Seuil  
Alberto Hernando

El País

1987

12 Mar: Ocasión de amar

R 166

by Nadine Gordimer  
Versal

La hija de Burger

R 167

by Nadine Gordimer  
Tusquets

Nora Catelli

26 Mar: El hombre ha muerto

R 168

by Wole Soyinka  
Alfaguara  
C A Caranci

L'Osservatore Romano

1987

25 Mar: L'uomo è morto

R 169

by Wole Soyinka  
Jaca Book  
Nicoletta Pietravalle

27 May: Letteratura negra di espressione francese

R 170

ed. Jacques Chevrier  
SEI  
Francesco Licinio Galati

02 Sep: La voce

R 171

by Gabriel Okara  
SEI  
G Battista Gandolfo

16 Sep: on Soyinka's plays

R 172

Jaca Book  
Italo A Chiusano

## La Stampa

1987

25 Jul: La voce

R 173

by Gabriel Okara  
SEI

Soyinka's plays

R 174

Jaca

Claudio Gorlier

## Il Manifesto

1987

25 Jan: a short story by Ama Ata Aidoo

R 285

15 Feb: "La leggenda di Dedan Kimathy,

R 293

leader del nuovo Kenya"

22 Mar: a short story by Sembene Ousmane

R 175

10 May: a short story by Alex La Guma

R 286

16 May: L'uomo è morto

R 176

by Wole Soyinka  
Jaca Book

23 Jun: Il lungo viaggio di Poppie Nongena

R 177

by Elsa Joubert  
Giunti

28 Jun: a short story by Cyprian Ekwensi

R 287

04 Jul: "L'imperatore Shaka il grande"

01 Aug: Letteratura negra di espressione francese

R 178

by Jacques Chevrier  
Sei

02 Aug: a short story by Charles Mungoshi

R 289

23 Aug: interview with Joshua Sinclair

R 291

28 Aug: "Shaka, eroe maledetto"

R 292



- 06 Oct: "Frontiere africane della letteratura"  
R 179  
on African literature magazines/journals
- 07 Oct: "Storie africane in lingue europee"  
R 294  
African writing in European languages
- 08 Oct: a short story by Leonard Kibera  
R 288
- 28 Dec: a short story by Richard Rive  
R 282  
reviews and translations by Cristiana Pugliese

Reviews (1986)  
The Daily/Sunday Telegraph

1986

13 Jul (S): Incidents at the Shrine  
R 180

by Ben Okri  
Heinemann  
Jane Ellison

12 Sep (D): Foe  
R 181

by J M Coetzee  
Secker  
Christopher Hawtree

17 Oct (D): on Wole Soyinka  
R 182

Nobel Prize  
David Holloway/Julian Isherwood

07 Nov (D): Messaouda  
R 183

by Abdelhak Serhane  
Carcanet  
Jaci Stephen

The Guardian

1986

24 Apr: Maps  
R 184

by Nuruddin Farah  
Picador  
Salman Rushdie

18 Jul: Incidents at the Shrine  
R 185

by Ben Okri  
Heinemann  
Christopher Wordsworth

01 Aug: Mating birds  
R 186

by Lewis Nkosi  
Constable  
Norman Shrapnel

12 Sep: Foe  
R 187

by J M Coetzee  
Secker & Warburg  
Christopher Wordsworth

17 Oct: on Wole Soyinka (Nobel Prize)  
R 188 Victoria Brittain

31 Oct: Messaouda  
R 189

by Abdelhak Serhane  
Carcamet  
Hilary Bailey

**The Independent**

1986

17 Oct: on Wole Soyinka

R 190

Nobel Prize  
Adewale Maja-Pearce

**The Morning Star**

1986

21 Aug: Fools and Other Stories

R 191

by Njabulo Ndebele  
Readers International  
Chris Searle

27 Nov: Decolonising the Mind

R 192

by Ngugi wa Thiong'o  
James Currey and Heinemann  
Chris Searle

**Le Figaro**

1986

17 Oct: on Wole Soyinka

R 193

Nobel Prize  
Guy Le Clec'h/Anne Muratori-Philip

**Le Monde**

1986

14 Mar: Une saison au paradis

R 194

by Breyten Breytenbach  
Seuil  
G L

14 Mar: L'ambassadeur

R 195

by André Brink  
Stock  
Bernard Génies

23 May: Naissance à l'aube

R 196

by Driss Chraïbi  
Le Seuil  
Anne Bragance

23 May: Mille ans un jour

R 197

by Edmond Amran El Maleh  
La Pensée Sauvage  
Josyane Savigneau

23 May: Les enfants des rues étroites

R 198

by Abdelhak Serhane  
Le Seuil  
Tahar Ben Jelloun

17 Oct: on Wole Soyinka (Nobel Prize)

R 199

Denise Coussy  
L'Humanité

1986

17 Oct: on Wole Soyinka

R 200

Nobel Prize  
Claude Prévost

#### ABC

1986

17 Oct: on Wole Soyinka

R 201

Nobel Prize  
Carmen Villar Mir/Juan Pedro Quiñonero

18 Oct: on 'Tigritude' and 'Negritude'

R 202

introducing African literature  
with poems by Soyinka, Senghor  
and Césaire  
Jahnheinz Jahn

29 Nov: Los soles de las independencias

R 203

by Ahmadou Kourouma  
Alfaguara  
Luís De Paola

#### La Vanguardia

1986

17 Oct: on Wole Soyinka

R 204

Nobel Prize  
Aranzazu Usandizaga/Robert Saladrigas

#### El Pais

1986

06 Mar: on Nadine Gordimer

R 205

17 Oct: on Wole Soyinka

R 206

Nobel Prize

Lluís Bassets/Carlos Caranci/Ricardo Moreno

23 Oct: on African presence  
R 207  
introducing African literature

**L'Osservatore Romano**

1986  
18 Oct: on Wole Soyinka  
R 208  
Nobel Prize  
Francesco Licinio Galati

**La Stampa**

1986  
31 Aug: on Nadine Gordimer  
R 209  
(same as in Le Monde)

27 Sep: Qualcosa là fuori  
R 210  
by Nadine Gordimer  
Feltrinelli  
Masolino D'Amico

17 Oct: on Wole Soyinka  
R 211  
Nobel Prize  
Claudio Gorlier

27 Dec: La vita e il tempo di Michael K  
R 212  
by J M Coetzee  
Rizzoli  
Itala Vivan

**La Repubblica**

1986  
17 Oct: on Wole Soyinka  
R213  
Nobel Prize  
Itala Vivan

**Il Manifesto**

1986  
14 Feb: La foresta dei mille demonii  
R 214  
by D O Fagunwa  
Mondadori

03 Aug: on Amos Tutuola  
R 281

18 Oct: on Wole Soyinka

- R 215 Nobel Prize  
with some poems by Wole Soyinka
- 26 Oct: on Ngugi wa Thiong'o  
R 280
- 16 Nov: on Chinua Achebe  
R 279
- 28 Dec: The collector of treasures  
R 216  
by Bessie Head  
with a short story

Reviews (1985)  
The Daily/Sunday Telegraph

1985

-

The Guardian

1985

14 Nov: The Ambassador

R 217

by André Brink  
Faber  
Robert Nye

The Morning Star

1985

31 Jan: The True Confessions of an Albino Terrorist

R 218

by Breyten Breytenbach  
Faber  
Tim Jenkins

04 Jul: A Wife for my Son

R 219

by Ali Ghalem  
Zed Books  
Veronica Harvey

Le Figaro

1985

21 Jun: Quelque chose, là-bas

R 220

by Nadine Gordimer  
Albin Michel  
Anne Muratori-Philip

23 Aug: La macération

R 221

by Rachid Boudjedra  
Denoël  
Rachid Boudjedra

06 Sep: La macération

R 222

by Rachid Boudjedra  
Denoël  
Pierre Sipriot

13 Sep: L'enfant de sable

R 223

by Tahar Ben Jelloun  
Seuil  
Claire Gallois

18 Oct: Impasse des deux palais  
R 224  
by Nāguib Mahfouz  
Lattès  
Venus Khoury Ghata

Le Monde

1985

29 Mar: Zayni Barakat  
R 225

by Gamal Ghitany  
Seuil  
Tahar Ben Jelloun

07 Jun: Michael K, sa vie, son temps  
R 226

by J M Coetzee  
Seuil  
Bernard Génès

07 Jun: Le baobab  
R 227

by Wilma Stockenström  
Rivages  
Bernard Génès

10 May: L'amour, la fantasia  
R 228

by Assia Djebar  
Lattès  
Tahar Ben Jelloun

09 Aug: Les terrasses d'Orsol  
R 229

by Mohammed Dib  
Sindbad  
Tahar Ben Jelloun

06 Sep: L'enfant de sable  
R 230

by Tahar Ben Jelloun  
Seuil  
Josyane Savigneau

20 Sep: L'impasse des deux palais  
R 231

by Nāguib Mahfouz  
Lattès  
J-P Péroncel-Hugoz



L'Humanité

1985

25 Jun: Quelque chose, là-bas

R 232

by Nadine Gordimer  
Albin Michel  
Claude Prévost

16 Oct: La macération

R 233

by Rachid Boudjedra  
Denoël  
Claude Prévost

ABC

1985

-

La Vanguardia

1985

-

El País

1985

-

L'Osservatore Romano

1985

20 Feb: Luglio

R 234

by Nadine Gordimer  
Rizzoli  
Francesco Licinio Galati

04 Feb: Un angolo d'Africa: il Kenya visto dai suoi

R 235

scrittori  
ed. Silvana Bottignole  
Morcelliana  
Nicoletta Pietravalle

30 Sep: on Nadine Gordimer

R 236

Carmine di Biase

La Stampa

1985

19 Jan: Luglio

R 237

by Nadine Gordimer  
Rizzoli

Occasione d'amare

- R 238      by Nadine Gordimer  
            Feltrinelli
- R 239      Il bacio d'un soldato  
            by Nadine Gordimer  
            La Tartaruga
- Claudio Gorlier
- 01 Jun: on Amos Tutuola  
R 240      Claudio Gorlier
- 12 Oct: La foresta dei mille demonii  
R 241      by Chief D O Fagunwa  
            Mondadori  
            Itala Vivan
- 21 Dec: Un ospite d'onore  
R 242      by Nadine Gordimer  
            Feltrinelli  
            Masolino D'Amico

Reviews (1984)  
The Guardian

1984

22 Mar: Something Out There

R 243

by Nadine Gordimer  
Cape  
Emma Tennant

03 May: Mouiroir: Mirrornotes of a Novel

R 244

by Breyten Breytenbach  
Faber  
Christopher Wordsworth

20 Sep: The Wall of the Plague

R 245

by André Brink  
Faber  
Christopher Wordsworth

Le Monde

1984

11 May: Confession véridique d'un terroriste albinos

R 246

by Breyten Breytenbach  
Stock  
Nicole Zand

08 Jun: Légende et vie d'Agoun'chich

R 247

by Mohammed Khaïr-Eddine  
Le Seuil  
Tahar Ben Jelloun

21 Sep: Le mur de la peste

R 248

by André Brink  
Stock  
Pierre Drachline

La Stampa

1984

03 Nov: Aké, gli anni dell'infanzia

R 249

by Wole Soyinka  
Jaca  
Alfredo Venturi

Reviews (1983)  
The Guardian

1983

29 Sep: The Life and Times of Michael K  
R 250

by J M Coetzee  
Secker & Warburg  
Norman Shrapnel

Le Monde

1983

04 Mar: Les belles de Tunis  
R 251

by Nine Moati  
Le Seuil  
S Koster

04 Mar: Aïlen ou la nuit du récit  
R 252

by Edmond Amran El-Maleh  
Maspero  
Raphaël Sorin

15 Jul: Ceux de July  
R 253

by Nadine Gordimer  
Albin Michel

R 254 Sur un banc du Luxembourg

by André Brink  
Stock

Gabrielle Rolin

07 Oct: Messaouda  
R 255

by Abdelhak Serhane  
Le Seuil  
Tahar Ben Jelloun

07 Oct: Messaouda  
R 256

by Abdelhak Serhane  
Le Seuil  
Josyane Savigneau

La Stampa

1983

14 May: Il bevitore di vino di palma  
R 257

by Amos Tutuola  
Adelphi

R 258

La mia vita nel bosco degli spiriti

by Amos Tutuola  
Adelphi

Claudio Gorlier

Reviews (1982)  
The Guardian

1982

21 Jan: Destination Biafra  
R 259

by Buchi Emechita  
Allison & Busby  
Norman Shrapnel

13 May: A Chain of Voices  
R 260

by André Brink  
Faber  
David Pownall

20 May: The Landscapes Within  
R 261

by Ben Okri  
Longman  
Hilary Bailey

17 Jun: To Die at Sunset  
R 262

by Elsa Joubert  
Hodder

R 263 Devil on the Cross

by Ngugi wa Thiong'o  
Heinemann

Hilary Bailey

Le Monde

1982

28 May: En attendant les barbares  
R 265

by J M Coetzee  
Maurice Nadeau

R 266 Un turbulent silence

by André Brink  
Stock

Jean-Claude Pomonti

17 Sep: Le fleuve détourné  
R 267

by Rachid Mimouni  
Laffont  
Jacques Cellard

17 Sep: Le démantèlement  
R 268

by Rachid Boudjedra  
Denoël

Gabrielle Rolin

17 Sep: La mère du printemps  
R 269

by Driss Chraïbi  
Seuil

R 270 L'Ordalie

by Abdellatif Laabi  
Denoël  
Bertrand Poirot-Delpech

La Stampa

1982

30 Oct: Aké, gli anni dell'adolescenza  
R 271

by Wole Soyinka  
Jaca  
Nadine Gordimer  
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Reviews (1981)  
The Guardian

1981

03 Sep: July's People  
R 272

by Nadine Gordimer  
Cape  
David Pownall

12 Nov: Ah, But your Land is Beautiful  
R 273

by Alan Paton  
Cape  
Christopher Wodsworth

26 Nov: Sardines  
R 274

by Nuruddin Farah  
Allison & Busby  
Norman Shrapnel

Le Monde

1981

04 Sep: La prière de l'absent  
R 275

by Tahar Ben Jelloun  
Le Seuil  
J-M G Le Clezio

27 Nov: Le vainqueur de coupe  
R 276

by Rachid Boudjedra  
Denoël

La répudiation  
R 277

by Rachid Boudjedra  
Gallimard

Bertrand Poirot-Delpech

La Stampa

1981

01 May: Il destino del leone  
R 278

by Wilbur Smith  
Longanesi  
Teresa Cremisi

